

## **Note to the Reader:**

**February 17, 2022**

This document, the *Union County - City of Blairsville 2022 Comprehensive Plan*, is draft document and remains a work in progress. It remains subject to further edits and changes as the governments and their stakeholders continue to review the material and offer suggested improvements, edits for accuracy, etc. As of this release the maps to be included with the document remain under development.

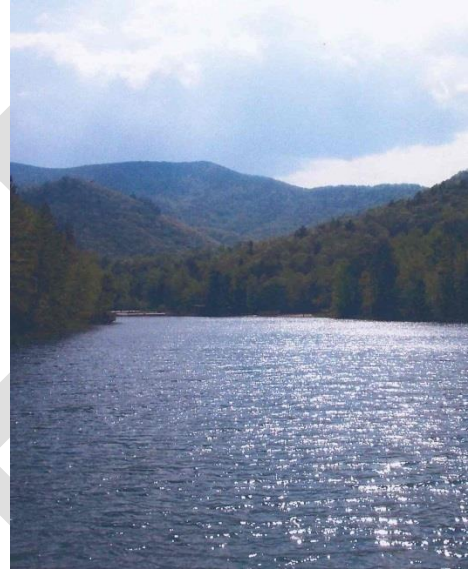
Please monitor the communities' web sites for updates to the document ahead of adoption.

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# *2022 Comprehensive Plan*

## Union County City of Blairsville



February, 2022

**DRAFT**

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# Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
Purpose & Scope	1
Plan Elements	1
Public Participation	2
<b>COMMUNITY VISION</b>	<b>4</b>
Community Profiles	4
Vision Statements	5
Stakeholder Input	8
<b>COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>11</b>
Broadband Assessment	11
Environmental Assessment	13
Land Use Assessment	16
Recommended Character Areas	20
<b>IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM</b>	<b>35</b>
Needs and Opportunities	36
Report of Accomplishments	42
Community Work Program	44
Policies and Long-Term Objectives	
<b>APPENDICES</b>	

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# INTRODUCTION

## Purpose & Scope

The purpose of the *Union County-Blairsville Comprehensive Plan* is to lay out a road map for the communities' future, developed through a very public process involving local leaders and stakeholders. The *Comprehensive Plan* includes identification of key needs and opportunities to address during the planning period, and an implementation program for achieving the vision and addressing the issues. The *Comprehensive Plan* is intended to generate local pride and enthusiasm about the future of the community, thereby making citizens wish to ensure that the plan is implemented.

This document addresses the local planning requirements and community development of Union County, Georgia, and its county seat, the City of Blairsville. Consideration was given throughout the process to conditions and possible impacts from adjoining jurisdictions and regarding the role of various partnering agencies in the area, such as the local schools and utility providers. Where necessary, the *Comprehensive Plan* will outline where cooperation and collaboration is required with other parties.

## Required Components

This comprehensive plan serves to meet the requirements and intent of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' "Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning," as amended in 2013, and the Georgia Planning Act of 1989. It is essential that the plan be prepared in compliance with these rules and guidelines for Lumpkin County to maintain their Qualified Local Government (QLG) status. Further, State law requires that the local government update its comprehensive plan every 5 years.

*"The purpose of Minimum Standards is to provide a framework for the development, management and implementation of local comprehensive plans at the local, regional and state government level. They reflect an important state interest: healthy and economically vibrant cities and counties are vital to the state's economic prosperity."*

**(1) Community Goals:** *The purpose of the Community Goals element is to lay out a road map for the community's future, developed through a very public process of involving community leaders and stakeholders in making key decisions about the future of the community. The Community Goals are the most important part of the plan, for they identify the community's direction for the future, and are intended to generate local pride and enthusiasm about the future of the community, thereby leading citizens and leadership to act to ensure that the plan is implemented.*

**(2) Needs and Opportunities:** *This is the locally agreed upon list of Needs and Opportunities the community intends to address. Each of the needs or opportunities that the community identifies as high priority must be followed-up with corresponding implementation measures in the Community Work Program. The list must be developed by involving community stakeholders in carrying out a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) or similar analysis of the community.*

**(3) Community Work Program:** *This element of the comprehensive plan lays out the specific activities the community plans to undertake during the next five years to address the priority Needs and Opportunities, identified Target Areas (if applicable), or to achieve portions of the Community*



*Goals. This includes any activities, initiatives, programs, ordinances, administrative systems (such as site plan review, design review, etc.) to be put in place to implement the plan.*

In addition to the required core elements local comprehensive plans in Georgia must also include the following:

***An assessment of Community Broadband Technology Capacity.*** *The purpose of the broadband assessment is to facilitate the “promotion of the deployment of broadband internet services” throughout each community in recognition of how vital this technology is for economic development. In an effort to provide advance compliance with this standard the County and municipalities will provide a brief analysis of their needs and objectives regarding broadband technology.*

***Consideration of the Regional Water Plan and the Environmental Planning Criteria.*** *During the process of preparing its comprehensive plan, each community must review the Regional Water Plan(s) covering its area and the Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria... to determine if there is need to adapt local implementation practices or development regulations to address protection of these important natural resources. The community must certify that it has considered both the Regional Water Plan and the Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria when it transmits the plan to the Regional Commission for review.*

As a community that has adopted a form of development regulations, the local governments must also include the necessary land use element within their plan to aid in the coordination of their development policies and capital improvement projects.

***Land Use Element.*** *The Land Use Element, where required, must include at least one of the two components listed below:*

*(a) Character Areas Map and Defining Narrative. Identify and map the boundaries of existing or potential character areas (see definition in Chapter 110-12-1-.05) covering the entire community, including existing community sub-areas, districts, or neighborhoods.*

*(b) Future Land Use Map and Narrative. Prepare a Future Land Use Map that uses conventional categories or classifications to depict the location (typically parcel by parcel) of specific future land uses. If this option is chosen, prepare the Future Land Use Map using either of the land use classification schemes described below and include a narrative that explains how to interpret the map and each land use category.*

The comprehensive plan was prepared in accordance with minimum procedural requirements for local plans, which include a public hearing prior to substantive work on the plan, and a public hearing prior to transmittal of the comprehensive plan for review by Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) and Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA).

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*Material for the Purpose, Required Components and Required Procedures has been taken from the appropriate sections of Georgia Department of Community Affairs’ “Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning.”*

## Public Participation

As a part of the planning process there must be opportunities to encourage public participation. The purpose of this is to ensure that citizens and other stakeholders are aware of the planning process, are

provided opportunities to comment on the local plan elements and have adequate access to the process of defining the community's vision, priorities, goals, policies, and implementation strategies.

Ahead of the public involvement process, the City and County each nominated persons to participate in a series of online meetings as part of the Plan Advisory Committee. The committee members included people from a variety of occupations and demographic groups, including long-time residents and relative newcomers. This committee met several times over the course of four months, providing comments and suggestions regarding key issues, assessment of survey data, and proposed draft plan material.

### Advisory Committee

Robert Medwed  
 Phillipe Frietag  
 Steve Rowe (Chamber of Commerce)  
 Daniel Davenport (Attorney)  
 Ben Newell  
 Brooke Seabolt  
 Jennifer Meyer  
 Robert Rogers  
 Jen Rushing (Bus Owner)  
 Colleen Urbaniuk (Hotel Mgr.)  
 Mitch Griggs (Development Authority)



Four public meetings were held at two different locations in Blairsville from November through early February. These meetings were of open-house formats, presenting a series of informational stations that invited public comments and questions. Each meeting built upon the input collected from previous meetings, online survey results, or discussions among staff and advisory committee members.

In addition, online surveys were made available to everyone in November 2021. By the mid-January more than 480 different responses had been received by the GMRC. (Summary of results and comments provided in the appendices.) These provided valuable insight into the prevailing concerns and desires of area residents, and gave the Advisory Committee and elected officials some direction on how to address the issues facing Union County and Blairsville.

The public input was combined with information about already-planned capital improvements and the general state of existing local conditions, painting a picture of the State of Blairsville and Union County circa 2021. This provided the framework for understanding why the public rated certain issues so highly, and the direction each community should take going forward.



# COMMUNITY VISION

The Minimum Standards and Requirements for Local Comprehensive Planning defines a community vision as something “... *intended to paint a picture of what the community desires to become, providing a complete description of the development patterns to be encouraged within the jurisdiction.*” It is required as an element of the comprehensive plan so that communities can truly establish a pure and simple ideal for themselves in a format that is easily expressed and understood.

Visioning provides communities with an opportunity to pause and consider the “big picture” as well as to attempt to clearly define their ideal future. Developing a vision means that community has at least tried to identify current values, describe how they’re to be realized in the future and use that image as a foundation for short and long-term planning. As a process this also requires the community to develop a consensus on what conditions to change or to preserve.

## Community Profiles

Established in 1832 by the cession of the Cherokee Indians, Union County was the eighth county created in Georgia and originally contained parts of what are now Towns County Fannin County. It lies in the Appalachian Highland Geological Region of the state amid picturesque mountains and valleys. This mountainous topography shaped the community’s economy and development patterns, with agriculture hard to sustain in sloping areas and most early settlements in the valley floors, typically aligned with militia posts such as Owltown, Ivy Log and Choestoe. As a result, forestry has been a large part of Union’s economic base, with some industrial activity flourishing after World War II. In time, the area’s lakes, parks, and natural beauty helped tourism also become an important economic contributor.

Despite the various early settlements, Blairsville is currently the only incorporated city within Union County. The county seat since its establishment in 1835, Blairsville developed around the County Courthouse located on a slight rise in the center of downtown Blairsville. In time, the surrounding blocks filled in and Blairsville became the civic and commercial hub of the area. Since stabilizing after WWII, residential areas took root around and outside the city, and the few arterial roads connecting Blairsville to other communities would eventually harbor auto-oriented businesses.

COMMUNITY	2010	2015	2020	Δ 2010 - 2020	
				#	%
<b>Union Co.</b>	<u>21,384</u>	<u>22,029</u>	<u>25,358</u>	<u>3,974</u>	<u>18.6%</u>
<b>Blairsville</b>	611	541	655	44	7.2%
<b>Unincorporated</b>	20,773	21,488	24,703	3,930	18.9%
<b>Georgia</b>	9,712,209	10,183,353	10,710,017	997,808	10.3%
<b>Fannin Co.</b>	23,684	24,455	26,521	2,837	12.0%
<b>Lumpkin County</b>	30,281	31,292	34,186	3,905	12.9%
<b>Towns Co.</b>	10,531	11,208	12,247	1,716	16.3%
<b>White Co.</b>	27,201	28,389	31,094	3,893	14.3%

The evolution of these economies means present-day Union County features an abundance of retiree households seeking scenic beauty and tranquility, plus a significant number of transient, second home or vacation residents during the summer months, weekends and holidays. Indigenous growth is now following transportation corridors, with the most intense urban-type development occurring along highways and at highway intersections, primarily in the vicinity of Blairsville where supporting infrastructure is available. “Retiree” residential development is occurring along connecting collector roads scattered throughout the County. Vacation homes are primarily being located along the shores of Lake Nottely, the Nottely River, various creeks and streams, and the high ridgelines that provide scenic views. Community commercial developments are now popping up at traditional crossroads areas because there is now a consumer base where there was once none.



## Vision Statements

A vision for the community’s future must be included in the comprehensive plan. The community vision is intended to provide a complete picture of what the community desires to become. The community vision must be based on public input, the assessment of current and future needs and be supported by the goals, policies and objectives in the comprehensive plan. In addition, there must be consistency between the community vision and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Quality Community Objectives as well as consistency with the community visions of other communities within the region.

The current vision statements originated from the previous planning cycles, where they were derived from the various comments and suggestions raised during public meetings and through the available survey process. They encapsulate the basic principles and values desired by existing residents and stakeholders, particularly in illustrating the way each community wishes to retain their existing character while simultaneously embracing some change, which seems inevitable based on regional growth patterns.



## VISION STATEMENT

## UNION COUNTY

*Union County, Georgia, is a hometown focused on its people, putting families first by celebrating its friendly, neighborly charm, providing a safe community, and investing in facilities and services that will provide the quality of life and opportunities for prosperity desired by its citizens.*

*Union County, Georgia, is a rural community respectful of its history and natural beauty, recognizing the value of, and striving to preserve for generations, its mountain setting, its agricultural roots, and its Appalachian heritage.*

*Union County, Georgia, is a community that supports its local businesses and institutions, prioritizing education, partnering with the City of Blairsville, and investing in the infrastructure necessary to sustain economic opportunity.*

*Union County, Georgia, is a community dedicated to open and efficient governance, where residents feel welcome and vested in the well-being of their hometown through fair and bold government.*

The vision statement for Union County was crafted to enshrine a commitment to sustaining the community's status as an endearing and quality hometown for area residents. The emphasis being that affordability, rustic nature, and overall quality of life inherent to the county should be preserved as best as possible. Economic development is cherished and desired, but only in a fashion that doesn't adversely impact the appeal and attraction of the community.

The County should routinely review policies and major projects for their capacity to support/ attain this vision over time, and planning for the future must recall this desire to preserve the area's rural character.



## VISION STATEMENT

## CITY OF BLAIRSVILLE

*The City of Blairsville, Georgia, is a proud civic and commercial destination serving area residents, business and visitors with small-town charm and southern hospitality.*

*The City of Blairsville offers a historical downtown that is inviting to all and serves as a cultural center for the community, providing facilities and opportunities that honor local heritage, encourage traditional business growth, and serves as host for social events. The City will protect and enhance this small urban fabric as a defining trait of the community's character and in a way that keeps the city unique.*

*The City of Blairsville strives to provide efficient and high-quality services in support of its citizens and local businesses. The City will be a wise steward of area financial and natural resources in pursuit of the well-being and prosperity of residents, enabling growth while focusing on the preservation of local character.*

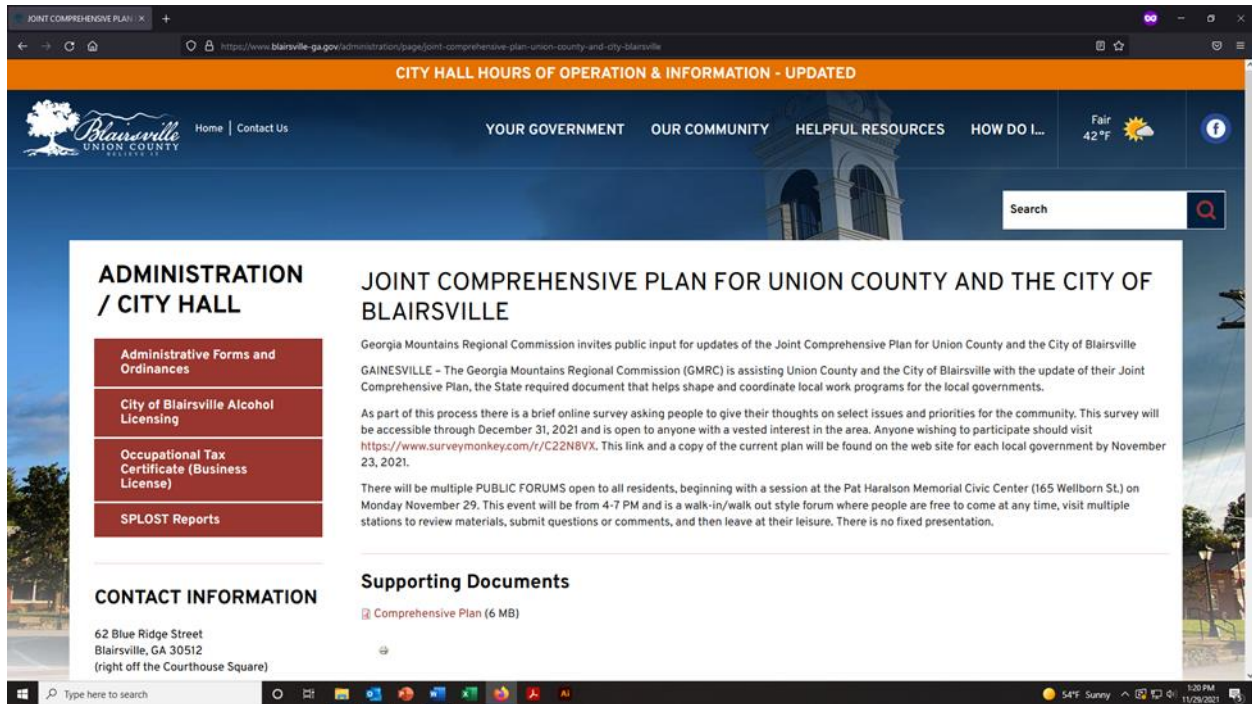
The City's vision is intended to strike a balance between Blairsville's role as a small hometown and that of a social destination in an increasingly popular part of the state. Blairsville is the default hub for employment, commerce, and public services in Union County, and is destined to receive some tourism and future development. It must manage these forces in ways that aid the local economy while likewise working to retain the small-town charm that locals and visitors alike have come to love. Key to this is affirming the City's commitment to protecting their historic elements and downtown fabric, prioritizing the idea that development should enhance this sense of scale and design. In so doing, the City will best preserve the cherished character of the community.





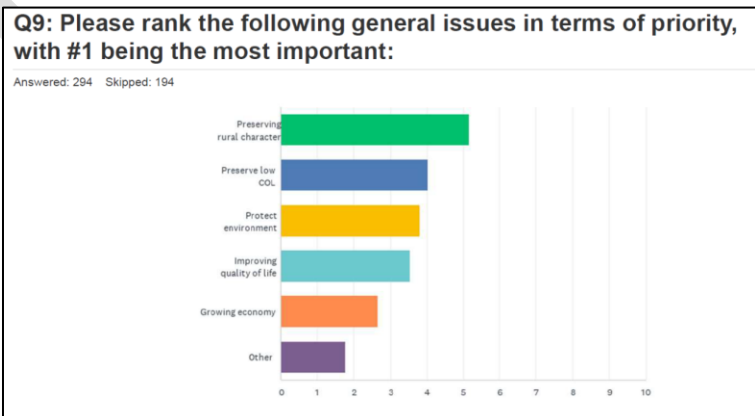
## Stakeholder Input

The effectiveness of any planning process requires identifying the needs that must be addressed to achieve a community's goals, clarifying the targets for the local government. While having the raw data about a community's demographics helps understand current conditions, engaging with area residents, business leaders, and other key stakeholders ensures that the plan will be built upon the interests and ambitions of the public, which helps ensure local leaders will be making future decisions in line with the residents' vision for the community.



### Highlights of Public Comments and Survey Results

The public involvement process produced almost 500 results via the online survey but limited engagement via live forums. The comments received, however, showed clearly discernable trends in what issues participants considered priorities. The live events and Advisory Committee helped to refine the list of key needs and opportunities facing Union County and Blairsville in 2022, as well as shaping proposed solutions.



The overwhelming priorities among participants in the planning process concerned the preservation of the area's rural character and small-town charm amidst the prospects of projected growth. Residents feared the loss of natural settings, increases in traffic and the costs of living, and the prospects that new development would be incompatible with the existing settings which the locals cherish. Change wasn't

viewed as inherently bad, but stakeholders were concerned that the prospective changes in store for Union County could prove to be too much, too soon, and that the County and City had limited measures in place to manage those changes. If Union County is to realize the vision desired by existing residents, the County and the City would need to review their policies and plans to ensure that those measures were designed to preserve the rural nature of the community.

There has been evidence of strong support for trying to keep Union County rural. To achieve this, it helps to know which aspects of rural character are most important to local residents. *When it comes to identifying what you love and wish to preserve about rural Union County, how important are each of the following elements?*

	Not at all	A little	Some	A lot	Very
Limited development outside of the city			1	5	4
Active agriculture				6	4
Scenic vistas/ Forests and parkland					10
Rural/ Appalachian architecture			5	2	3
Small population/ Sense that I know everyone		3	3	1	3

Within this issue, participants considered it critical that the surrounding National Forests be protected from development. As best as possible, these areas should be reserved for wildlife, recreation, and timber production, thus allowing the woodlands to remain a natural buffer that shelters Blairsville from neighboring communities, and to keep the natural beauty of the hills and mountains intact.

Additional areas of concern included public safety and communication issues between local government and area residents. The communication issues stem from both evolutions in technology, which affects how people expect to access and receive information, and a heightened level of engagement by segments of the population. The result is that many residents see shortcomings in some current practices that could be improved at the City and County level, including measures for improving public awareness, education, and input into select processes. This was seen as critical not only as a measure of public trust but also to use transparency to improve efficiency and ensure the governments are using technology to streamline their own procedures.

The matter of safety seems to rest in part on the fear of changes that may come with growth and is linked to both traffic congestion and possible crime. Some of that fear, however, may also be linked to the communication issue cited above; While specific incidents could be cited it was unclear if overall trends showed notable increases in crime rates versus just an improved awareness of all criminal activity. What was noted is that residents wanted assurances from authorities about measures being taken, both in managing existing conditions and in trying to manage new development in ways that would minimize potential impacts to the community, including threats to public safety.

A key facet of that concern is the issue of affordable housing. Many participants acknowledge the need for affordable housing in the area, particularly as land prices have gone up due to Union County's increasing popularity. But past efforts regarding the development of new units targeting typical workforce households have met with mixed results from the public, and buildable land is at a premium in the area. If Blairsville and Union County are to find ways to preserve the affordability of the area, it will involve not only concerted efforts to keep taxes low but to also find the means to foster new housing models that are both accessible to all sectors of the local labor force and in locations and forms that fit within the context of the community. Participants encouraged exercises in reviewing housing construction costs and different building types to find models that should be promoted to developers.



SWOT Analysis

One facet of the public input process asks communities to assess the information outlined to identify their respective Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. In doing this analysis, communities can more effectively define their objectives and actions to as to better achieve the desired vision.



This part of the planning process also reviewed various forms of data and information about each community. Information such as Census data and Department of Labor data was reviewed for insight into local conditions, plus each local government was asked to provide summaries of their immediate operational and capital improvement needs to give an indication of their priorities ahead of discussions about public objectives. When evaluating this data and information the planning process focused on whether it verified needs or opportunities identified previously, whether it uncovered new needs or opportunities not previously identified, and whether it indicates significant local trends that need to be considered in the planning process.

STRENGTHS/ KEY ASSETS	WEAKNESSES/ LIABILITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small town charm</li> <li>Scenic areas/ Nature/ Forests</li> <li>Schools</li> <li>Airport</li> <li>Medical center</li> <li>Location/ Limited accessibility</li> <li>Friendly/ Safe community</li> <li>Locally owned businesses</li> <li>Lake</li> <li>Water &amp; sewer capacity</li> <li>Outdoor recreation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of affordable housing</li> <li>Limited employment options</li> <li>Limited means to manage growth</li> <li>Limited accessibility</li> <li>Communication issues b/w government and residents</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES/ UNIQUE POSSIBILITIES	THREATS/ OUTSIDE RISKS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growth coming to the region</li> <li>Ways to grow tourism</li> <li>Room for infill development</li> <li>Can tap into talent of retirees</li> <li>Time to update policies ahead of growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growth coming to the region</li> <li>Increasing traffic</li> <li>Fear of increased crime</li> <li>Development intruding into forest lands</li> </ul>

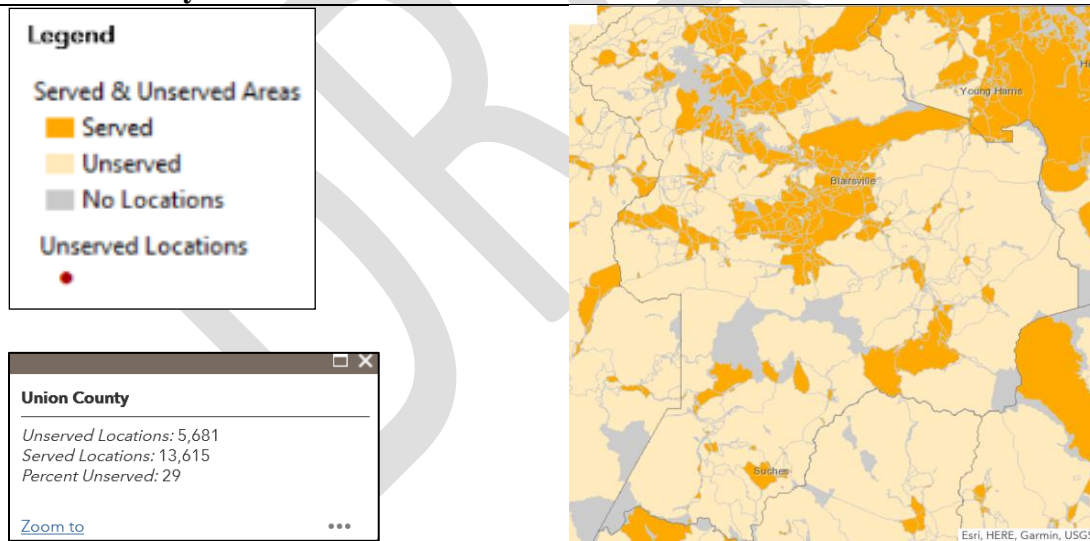
# COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

## Broadband Assessment

The growing importance of access to reliable and high-speed, high-capacity internet connections cannot be overestimated. Unserved and underserved areas of Georgia will not remain economically competitive without sufficient internet infrastructure, as this technology becomes the default utility for all manners of communication. To address this issue the Georgia General Assembly amended the provisions of local planning in Georgia by passing the "*Achieving Connectivity Everywhere (ACE) Act*" to facilitate the enhancement and extension of internet access in communities. The ACE Act requires all local governments to incorporate the "*promotion of the deployment of broadband internet services*" into their local plan. Once these are in place the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and the Department of Economic Development will identify and promote facilities and developments that offer broadband services at a rate of not less than 1 gigabit per second in the downstream to end users that can be accessed for business, education, health care, government.

One of the first products to come out of the Georgia Broadband Initiative was an inventory of general conditions across the State regarding access to high speed/ high-capacity broadband technology. Utilizing demographic data from the US Census Bureau and cross-referencing that information with knowledge of broadband infrastructure, the Department of Community Affairs produced a series of maps depicting the state of broadband accessibility in rural areas.

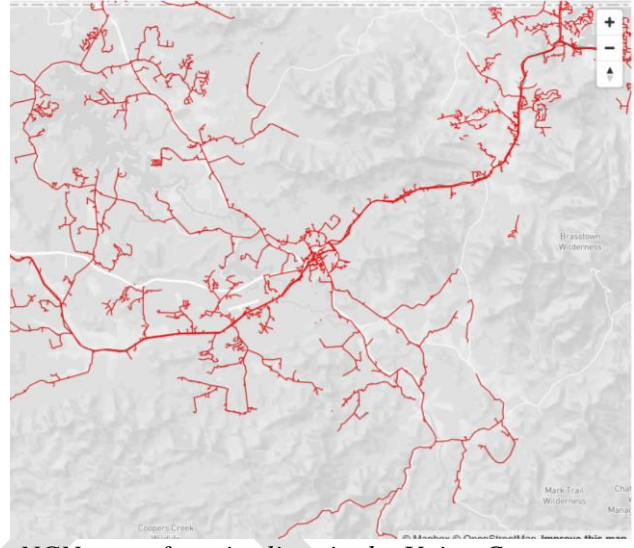
### Union County Broadband Access - 2021



The map portrays broadband statistics for the State of Georgia. Statistics are available by census block, county and legislative boundary. Statistics are based on a fixed, terrestrial broadband definition of 25 Mbps down and 3 Mbps up, and where the broadband service is available to more than 80% of locations in a census block. Census blocks that did not meet this definition are delineated as 'Unserved'. The map depicts access to broadband, not subscription status.



The County does have access to the North Georgia Network (NGN), an incorporated cooperative providing a regional fiber optic system with over 1,600 linear miles of infrastructure. The NGN was conceived with hopes for a more prosperous rural Georgia, knowing that a fast, reliable, and affordable fiber optic network is vital to modern economic development. The NGN provides infrastructure with 100 gigabit core line and connects to almost all the schools and colleges in the region as well as reaching many government structures and prominent business parks. This network does run through Blairsville and along most arterial and collector roadways, but the premier issue remains “last mile” connections, bringing the highest capacity connections to rural homes.



NGN map of service lines in the Union County area.

As an additional reference, Union County and Blairsville were included in the 2014 Georgia Mountains Digital Economy Plan (DEP), one of several such plans developed for each region across Georgia in accordance with standards defined by the Georgia Technology Authority (GTA). The DEP was designed to identify and coordinate the resources and efforts related to improving the region’s infrastructure in support of hi-tech industries and economies. As each regional plan is completed, the State and its partners can begin directing their energy and resources with clearer focus and understanding of needs from every part of Georgia. While specific investment actions have not been identified as part of this initial process, the DEP provides a work scope that addresses key focus areas and recommendations that will help the GMRC, its member governments and regional stakeholders move forward with an understanding of the regional and state context for building network connectivity, improving educational resources and fostering technology hubs.

#### Priorities for Future Network Enhancements

- *Extension of higher-capacity trunk lines from NGN*
- *Long-term plan for “last-mile” connections*



## Environmental Assessment

A region's natural resources are the native conditions and elements that contribute to the local character and livelihood, such as the rivers and lakes supplying public water, mineral deposits that support local industry, or a scenic park serving locals and tourists. These resources can, when properly managed, greatly serve a community's health, culture, and economy. However, because these sites and conditions are highly susceptible to disturbance from human activity, they are also regarded environmentally sensitive and need to be preserved for public benefit.

### Clean Water Act Compliance

<b>Y</b>	Any "not supporting" 303(d) listed waterbodies? ( <i>See Below</i> ) <i>If yes, these waterbodies have been found contaminated to the extent that they are not considered supporting their designated use. As such the local community should seek to manage land uses within the watershed so as to yield healthier water quality.</i>
<b>Y</b>	Any 305(b) listed waterbodies? ( <i>See Below</i> )
<b>N</b>	<i>If yes, do the Implementation Plans/Watershed Management Plans require any outstanding actions from the local government? If so, please include these actions within the Implementation Program.</i>

Georgia employs two tiers of water quality standards for environmental planning purposes: A general criteria applicable to all waters and more detailed, specific criteria for each of six designated uses. The general criteria (shown below) are qualitative and reflect the goals from Georgia's streams, rivers, ponds and lakes. These are established to ensure consistency across resource initiatives and to keep a comprehensive perspective in everything EPD does for maintain water quality. Once designations are made, the State of Georgia assesses its water bodies for compliance with water quality standards criteria established for their designated uses as required by the Federal Clean Water Act (CWA). Assessed water bodies are placed into one of three categories depending on water quality assessment results: *Supporting* designated use, *Not Supporting* designated use, or *Assessment Pending*. These water bodies are found on Georgia's 305(b) list as required by that section of the CWA that addresses the assessment process and are published in Water Quality in Georgia (GA EPD, 2019).

Union County currently features 25 stream segments that are listed as Not Supporting their designated use, and another 4 with their assessment pending. These waters are the ones in need of ongoing monitoring and possible future mitigation to ensure the water quality does not become so impaired as to harm wildlife or people. Most of the pollution issues in Union County concern Biota – Fish impairment (commonly associated with chemicals like phosphates) or fecal coliform bacteria, with both attributed to non-point source contamination, meaning the polluting agents aren't coming from a pipe or obvious source but are instead washing into the streams from broad areas. Currently, the County and Georgia EPD have plans in place to address these issues, with most streams having already been reviewed as part of a watershed management plan or comparable assessment. So long as the County continues to enforce proper standards and that all stakeholders encourage best practices regarding livestock management and chemical applications it is hoped the conditions will improve.

Union County also has another 10 streams that have been monitored as part of past contaminant concerns but that have since been restored to supporting standards. These streams are still tested and monitored by EPD, however, and no additional action is needed regarding their protection at this time.



**State Listed Water Bodies in Union County (Supporting or Assessment Pending)**

NAME	LOCATION	SIZE (miles)	STATUS	CAUSE	SOURCE
Bryant Creek	Headwaters to Cooper Creek	3.0	S		
Butler Creek	Tributary to Nottely River	3.0	S		
Conley Creek	Tributary to Lake Nottely	3.0	S		
Cooper Creek	Bryant Creek to unnamed tributary approx 0.5 mi d/s Union County Line	5.0	S		
Coosa Creek	Headwaters to East Fork Coosa Creek	4.0	S		
Fortenberry Creek	Headwaters to the Nottely River	3.0	S		
Helton Creek	Headwaters to Turkey Creek	1.0	S		
Right Prong Butternut Creek	Headwaters to Butternut Creek	3.0	S		
Suches Creek	Baker Branch to the Toccoa River (formerly Union County)	2.0	S		
Vogel State Park Beach	Trahlyta Lake - Vogel State Park	0.1	S		
Chattahoochee River	Upstream Jasus Creek	7.0	AP		
Toccoa River	Headwaters to Big Creek	22.0	AP		
Town Creek	Powell Valley Creek to Townsend Branch	2.0	AP		
Youngcane Creek	Payne Creek to Little Youngcane Creek	1.0	AP		

**Legend**

<b>AP</b>	Assessment Pending
<b>NS</b>	Not Supporting
<b>Bio F</b>	Biota – Fish Impairment
<b>FC</b>	Fecal Coliform
<b>NP</b>	Nonpoint source pollution

**State Listed Water Bodies in Union County (Non-Supporting)**

NAME	LOCATION	SIZE (miles)	STATUS	CAUSE	SOURCE
Anderson Creek	Headwaters to Coosa Creek	3.0	NS	Bio F	NP
Arkaqua Creek	Pine Ridge Road to Nottely River	4.0	NS	Bio F	NP
Bitter Creek	Headwaters to Brasstown Creek	3.0	NS	Bio F	NP
Canada Creek	Wildhog creek to the Toccoa River	2.0	NS	Bio F	NP
Cooper Creek	Lake Winfield Scott to Logan Creek	2.0	NS	Bio F	NP
Cooper Creek	Logan Creek to Bryant Creek	5.0	NS	Bio F	NP
Coosa Creek	Anderson Creek to Nottely Lake	1.0	NS	Bio F	NP
Dooley Creek	Tributary to Nottely River	6.0	NS	Bio F	NP
East Fork Coosa Creek	Headwaters to Coosa Creek	6.0	NS	Bio F	NP
Helton Creek	Headwaters to the Nottely River	4.0	NS	Bio F	NP
Jones Creek	Headwaters to Youngcane Creek	4.0	NS	Bio F	NP
Little Youngcane Creek	Mason Branch to Youngcane Creek	2.0	NS	Bio F	NP
Lower Youngcane Creek	Headwaters to Youngcane Creek	2.0	NS	Bio F	NP
Nottely River	Downstream Lake Nottely	2.0	NS	Bio F	Dam
Stink Creek	Headwaters to the Nottely River (formerly Union County)	5.0	NS	Bio F	NP
Town Creek	Townsend Branch to the Nottely River	3.0	NS	Bio F	NP
Wolf Creek	Lake Trahlyta to the Nottely River	3.0	NS	Bio F	NP
Butternut Creek	Tributary to Nottely Lake - Blairsville	2.0	NS	Bio F, FC	NP
Youngcane Creek	Little Youngcane Creek to Nottely Lake	4.0	NS	Bio F, FC	NP
West Fork Wolf Creek	Headwaters to Wolf Creek (formerly Headwaters to the Nottely River)	4.0	NS	Bio M	NP
Ivylog Creek	Tributary to Lake Nottely	7.0	NS	Bio M, Bio F, FC	NP
Nottely River	US Hwy 19 to Lake Nottely	8.0	NS	E Coli, FC	NP
Nottely River	Right/Left Forks to US Hwy 19	6.0	NS	E Coli, FC	NP
Brasstown Creek	Little Bald Cove to Yewell Branch	4.0	NS	FC, Bio F	NP
Moccasin Creek	Lance Branch to State Line	2.0	NS	pH	NP

Source: Georgia EPD, 2020

**Environmental Planning Criteria**

Characteristic	Union County	Blairsville
<i>Floodplains</i>	Y	Y
<i>Forest Lands</i>	Y	
<i>Ground Water Recharge Areas</i>	Y	
<i>Plant &amp; Animal Habitat</i>	Y	
<i>Prime Agricultural Lands</i>		
<i>Protected Mountains</i>	Y	
<i>Steep Slopes</i>	Y	Y
<i>Water Supply Watersheds</i>	Y	
<i>Wetlands</i>	Y	Y
<i>Protected Rivers</i>	Y	

Within Union County are several resources covered by the *Environmental Planning Criteria*. The Criteria was established through the Georgia Planning Act as a method of identifying minimum standards that should be implemented to protect Georgia's most sensitive natural resources including wetlands, water supply watersheds, protected rivers, groundwater recharge areas, and mountain protection areas. Local governments are encouraged to adopt regulations for the protection of relevant natural resources to maintain their eligibility for certain state grants, loans, and permits. DNR has developed model ordinances to be used as guides for local governments as they develop the necessary regulations to meet EPD standards. Union County and Blairsville have regulations in place to address these environmental conditions, however from time to time it may review these standards and policies to see if they need revisions or updates.

Throughout this process, Union County and Blairsville understand their need to be compliant with all applicable State laws and regulations regarding environmental planning and protection. This is to certify that as part of this planning process appropriate staff and decision-makers have reviewed the *Coosa-North Georgia Water Plan*, the *Georgie Mountains Regional Plan*, and the *Georgia State Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria* (O.C.G.A. 12-2-8) and taken them into consideration in formulating this local plan. No conflicts were identified between this document and the other documents

**Land Use Assessment**

Land use management policies and programs represent guidelines for shaping development patterns that provide for efficient growth while also protecting sensitive social and environmental areas. As such communities should take into account their current and immediately projected conditions and assess the identified needs and issues regarding the built landscape and community services for the area. This section presents an inventory of existing land use patterns and development trends for the community, allowing the local government to produce the most effective policies needed to manage the demands from projected development.

Union County's topography is rugged with steep slopes interspersed with small rough surfaced plateaus and narrow winding valleys. Private forest lands and U. S. Forest Service property comprise the vast majority of the county. Some of this is used for silviculture, natural buffering between land uses, agricultural experimentation, and as public woodland that provides much of the scenic beauty and recreational opportunities for the county. Combined, these lands represent more than 80% of the total land area (approximately 177,000 acres) with more than 98,000 acres of that land falling under jurisdiction of the U. S. Forest Service and Tennessee Valley Authority. Land limitations such as these are quite beneficial on one hand but tend to limit the types of industry that can locate in Union County.

Limitations have a direct impact on local jobs causing most of Union County's working age population to seek employment elsewhere. This out-migration takes money out of local coffers and weakens the local economy on many levels.

The 1980s and 1990s saw a significant increase in retirees to Union County. This influx of older Americans has led to the development of much of the county's available land for retirement homes and resort communities. In addition, areas that have been historically inaccessible to heavy development such as high ridges and mountain tops, have become greatly impacted by out-of-towners seeking locations for seasonal residences or second homes. Additional residential oriented development can be found along the shores of Lake Nottely, the Nottely River, and smaller creeks and streams. Transient activity swarms into the area during the summer months, weekends and holidays causing periods of economic highs and lows for local businesses. Although some revenue is gained by allowing the development of places like ridge tops, the long-term impacts may adversely impact the local scenery, ecology and economy.

As the County seat, the only municipality, and the chief provider of water and sewer, Blairsville remains the focus of heavier development patterns. Centered around the historic downtown the city has some neighborhoods immediately surrounding a commercial and civic core, with pockets of industrial and institutional activity mixed in. The bypass that runs around the southwest corner of the city connects two arterials and provides a center for small industrial operations and the local schools.

#### Development Trends and Forces

- There are five independent water operations within Union County: The City of Blairsville, Coosa Water Authority, Notla Water Authority, the City of Young Harris and Towns County Water Authority. Both the City of Young Harris Water System and the Towns County Water Authority only provide water service to a small number of residences and businesses in the extreme eastern portion of Union County and are not planning significant expansions in the near future. The remaining providers handle areas in the central sections of the county as well as the City of Blairsville. Blairsville is the only wastewater service provider in Union County.
- US 76 is the primary east/west arterial road and harbors most of the auto-oriented uses such as strip shopping centers, most of which are in or adjacent to the city. US 129 is the north/south artery with access through the mountains to major medical and educational options south of Union County, as well as a route northward into North Carolina near Lake Nottely.
- The City of Blairsville recently completed a major streetscape project that has spurred redevelopment in and around downtown. Vacancy rates have dropped and there have been calls for increased in-town housing options. The City and Downtown Development Authority are pursuing an urban redevelopment strategy to explore options for expanding sidewalks, encouraging infill, and finding space for additional civic projects such as parks and a possible civic center.
- The only major industrial properties are west of town in the industrial park adjacent to the airport. There are some sites available for new tenants, but the County does have limited utility capacity/distribution for major users of water and sewer, so opportunities for industrial growth beyond the existing areas may require substantial investment in utility improvements.
- Neither Union County nor Blairsville employ significant land use management policies save for subdivision regulations, nuisance ordinances and minimal environmental protections. Public debate about the possible costs and benefits of tools such as zoning or design guidelines have

been discussed, with the most significant pressures coming from 1) fears of over-development scarring the natural beauty of the area and detracting from small town charm, and 2) a desire to see infill in the city that is compatible with existing forms.

### Areas Requiring Special Attention

Analysis of the prevailing trends will assist in the identification of preferred patterns of growth for the future. More specifically such analyses can identify those areas requiring special attention regarding management policies, such as natural or cultural resources likely to be intruded upon or otherwise impacted by development. As part of this process, stakeholders and local governments are encouraged to evaluate the presence of subsets of their communities subject to special circumstances such as:

- ✓ *Areas where rapid development or change of land uses is likely to occur*
- ✓ *Areas where the pace of development has and/or may outpace the availability of community facilities and services, including transportation*
- ✓ *Areas in need of redevelopment and/or significant improvements to aesthetics or attractiveness (including strip commercial corridors)*
- ✓ *Large, abandoned structures or sites, including possible environmental contamination.*
- ✓ *Areas with significant infill development opportunities (scattered vacant sites).*
- ✓ *Areas of significant disinvestment, levels of poverty, and/or unemployment substantially higher than average levels for the community as a whole*

Upon consideration of development trends and land use issues in Union County, the following priorities stand out for the planning period:

The only section of Union County considered experiencing rapid development would be the Hwy 76 corridor running east/west across the county. As the only significant expressway this road is the hub for industrial growth and newer commercial development. The pace of development is not considered a concern, however, and is generally in line with expectations of the community. (See *Mixed Use Commercial* character area)

The Highway 515 corridor is experiencing significant growth and interest in increased development. This is also the main corridor seeing conventional development forms that contrast with the regional, rural character of the community. (See *Hwy. 515 Corridor* character area)











There are a few vacant industrial buildings surrounding Blairsville but none in a significant concentration to be considered a target area. Hwy 19 reaching northward from Blairsville does feature some pockets of impoverished housing and dilapidated commercial sites. The County and the Development Authority are planning a revitalization of this corridor. (See *Murphy Highway Corridor* character area)

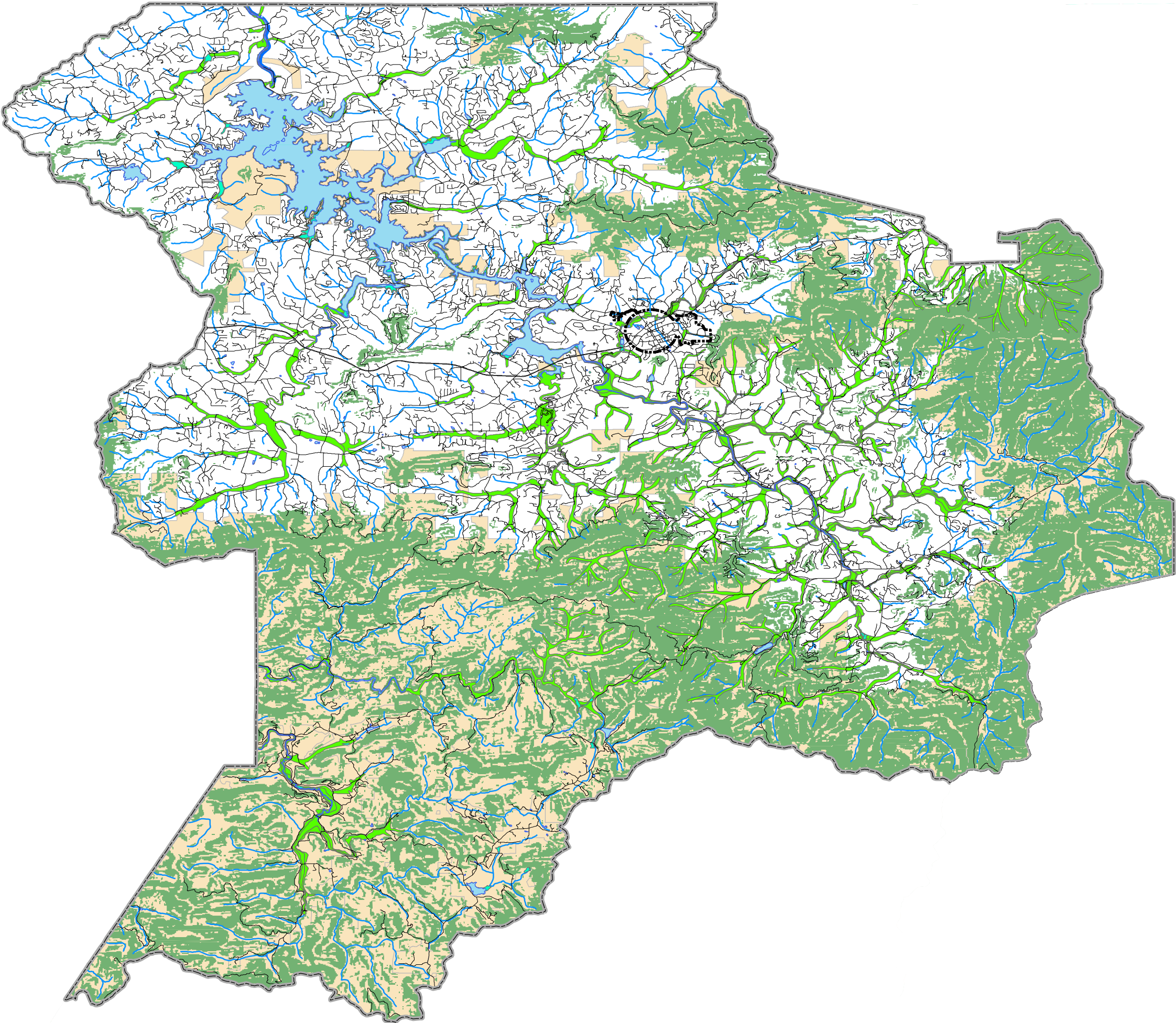
The first few miles of the Hwy 19 corridor heading northward from Blairsville features some concentration of dilapidated properties. Unemployment concerns for Union County are not confined to specific areas. (See *Murphy Highway Corridor* character area)



# Union County Areas Requiring Special Attention

## Legend

-  City of Blairsville
-  Roads
-  Lakes and Ponds
-  Rivers and Streams
- Areas Requiring Special Attention**
  -  Union County Flood Areas
  -  Protected Rivers
  -  Ground Water Recharge Areas
  -  National Wetlands Inventory
  -  Protected Mountains
  -  Conservation Lands





## Recommended Character Areas

Character area planning is designed to focus on the physical appearance (aesthetics) and function of a particular area. Development strategies are tailored and applied to each individual area. The goal is to enhance the existing character/function or promote a new, more desirable character for the future. Character areas identify portions of the community that have a unique or special character that needs to be preserved or require special attention because of unique development issues

A key component of the comprehensive planning process is the development of a Character Area Map that reflects the city's vision for future growth and development during the course of the planning period. This vision was developed through an extensive public visioning process and expresses the unique character of various portions of the city. The various character areas, then, are intended to support the overall future development strategy by organizing common themes of development patterns throughout the community. They promote the desired development patterns and provide a framework for coordination of capital improvement projects that may impact development. The following pages present the map and narratives of each Character area associated with Union County and the City of Blairsville.

Each identified character area outlines a specific vision or plan that includes the following:

- Written description and pictures or illustrations that identify the patterns and scales of development encouraged in that area.
- Identification of implementation measures to achieve the desired development patterns for the area, including more detailed sub-area planning, new or revised local development regulations, incentives, public investments, and infrastructure improvements.

As neither the County nor the City currently have formal land use management policies, there will not be any formal discussion of recommended or priority land uses within the character areas at this time. As either community considers land use management policies in the future they will update the Character Area descriptions accordingly.

### CHARACTER AREAS

**Downtown Blairsville**  
**Gainesville Highway Corridor**  
**Murphy Highway Corridor**  
**Highway 515/441 Corridor**  
**Rural**  
**US Forest Service**  
**Mixed-use Commercial**



**Narrative** *Downtown Blairsville*

Blairsville is one of the smaller historic downtowns among GMRC cities, and as a result has fewer parcels available for commercial or other uses. This limits the ability of downtown to serve as a destination of retail or dining activity pending the nature and occupancy of the area, a condition worsened by half of one block facing the square given to private parking.

The anchors for downtown begin with two civic destinations: Blairsville City Hall and the historic courthouse. The Romanesque-design courthouse within the town square has been restored and serves as a local Union County Historic Society Museum and Cultural Center, providing a public amenity and focal point for social events on the square. It lacks sizable, ADA accessible event space, however, and is not considered large enough to draw volumes of visitors on its own. City Hall, which also houses the Police Department, does generate a sizable amount of traffic for common administrative and civic services.

Just north of the square are a local Foodland grocery and the Country Kitchen restaurant generating a mix of daily traffic. Combined with the two restaurants directly on the square, including the locally popular Hole in the Wall, these businesses arguably produce the most frequent visitations to downtown.

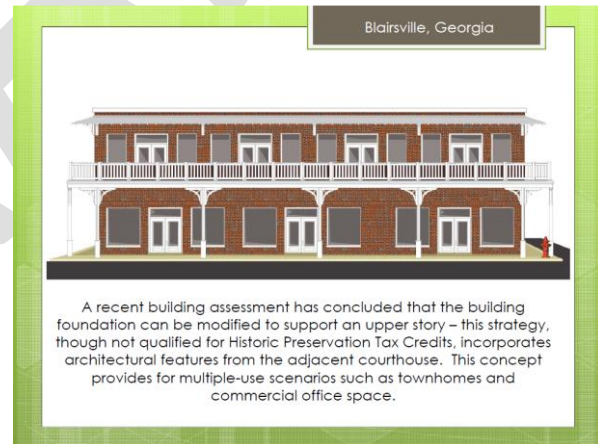
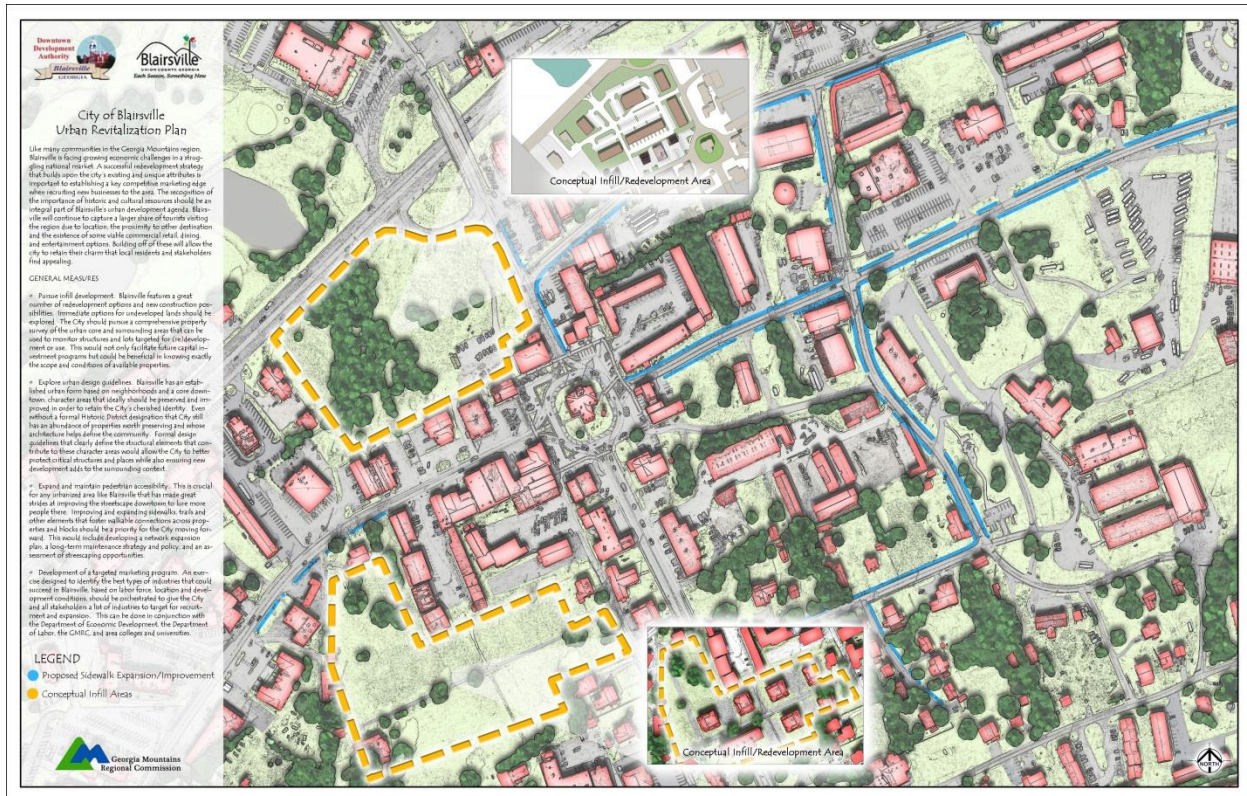


Other retail shops in the area include a trophy shop, hardware, auto parts, resale clothing and a musical instruments shop. The bulk of remaining businesses are service oriented, including attorneys and PC repair. This overall mix of businesses is considered a moderate draw compared to the Blairsville market as a whole but still struggles to compete with the east/west running arterial highway of US 76 features an array of national chain shops and regional big-box stores.

Recent efforts focused on attracting new businesses to the square have concentrated on retail or office operations. Dining options for the area are considered sufficient, with all still hungry for more business. An overflow of service industries, however, particularly those catering to lower-end clientele or limited use, would provide occupancies but do little in driving up visitations.

Blairsville does have some strong assets, particularly the presence of a small motel right off the square. A small,  $\frac{1}{4}$  arc truck route means most heavy vehicle traffic doesn't go through the square, aiding walkability. The city underwent a successful streetscape effort in 2013, as well, that upgraded lighting and sidewalks as well as renovating one intersection to increase parking and improve safety.





**Implementation Measures** *Downtown Blairsville*

- ***Pursue infill development.*** Blairsville features a great number of redevelopment options and new construction possibilities. Immediate options for undeveloped lands should be explored. The City should pursue a comprehensive property survey of the urban core and surrounding areas that can be used to monitor structures and lots targeted for (re)development or use. This would not only facilitate future capital investment programs but could be beneficial in knowing exactly the scope and conditions of available properties.
- ***Explore urban design guidelines.*** Blairsville has an established urban form based on neighborhoods and a core downtown, character areas that ideally should be preserved and improved in order to retain the City's cherished identity. Even without a formal Historic District designation that City still has an abundance of properties worth preserving and whose architecture helps define the community. Formal design guidelines that clearly define the structural elements that contribute to these character areas would allow the City to better protect critical structures and places while also ensuring new development adds to the surrounding context.
- ***Expand and maintain pedestrian accessibility.*** This is crucial for any urbanized area like Blairsville that has made great strides at improving the streetscape downtown to lure more people there. Improving and expanding sidewalks, trails and other elements that foster walkable connections across properties and blocks should be a priority for the City moving forward. This would include developing a network expansion plan, a long-term maintenance strategy and policy, and an assessment of streetscaping opportunities.
- ***Development of a targeted marketing program.*** An exercise designed to identify the best types of industries that could succeed in Blairsville, based on labor force, location and development conditions, should be orchestrated to give the City and all stakeholders a list of industries to target for recruitment and expansion. This can be done in conjunction with the Dept. of Economic Development, the Dept. of Labor, the GMRC, and area colleges and universities.
- ***Continue to push the Façade Rehabilitation Program.*** This program endows local property owners with access to tax credits and professional assistance in the restoration and adaptive reuse of older building exteriors. Blairsville has several properties that could benefit from this program and offer brighter, more inviting fronts to their businesses that would also enhance the public streetscape. The GMRC and the State offer assistance and guidance as part of their regular operations and could be available to help Blairsville with any of these efforts.
- ***Landscaping and decorative plantings.*** Building off of the initial streetscape project, adding decorative plantings and landscaping, as well as artistic elements and signage, can not only soften the scene and add visual appeal but can also enhance pedestrian safety. Flora can be chosen to add seasonal appeal and strengthen Blairsville's sense of place as a true mountain community.
- ***Add more artistic features throughout the city.*** Adding artistic elements to any park or streetscape not only adds to the decorative and visual appeal but these pieces often become intrinsic parts of the community's identity and social fabric. They may illustrate local artist's work, tell stories of local culture, or simply create focal points for gathering and make public spaces something more fun and interesting. Fountains, sculptures, gardens and monuments are samples of artistic elements commonly used in cityscapes to take public spaces and give them a broader sense of civic identity. Done properly Blairsville can identify places to introduce more artistic elements that will enliven the urban scene and build on the community character.



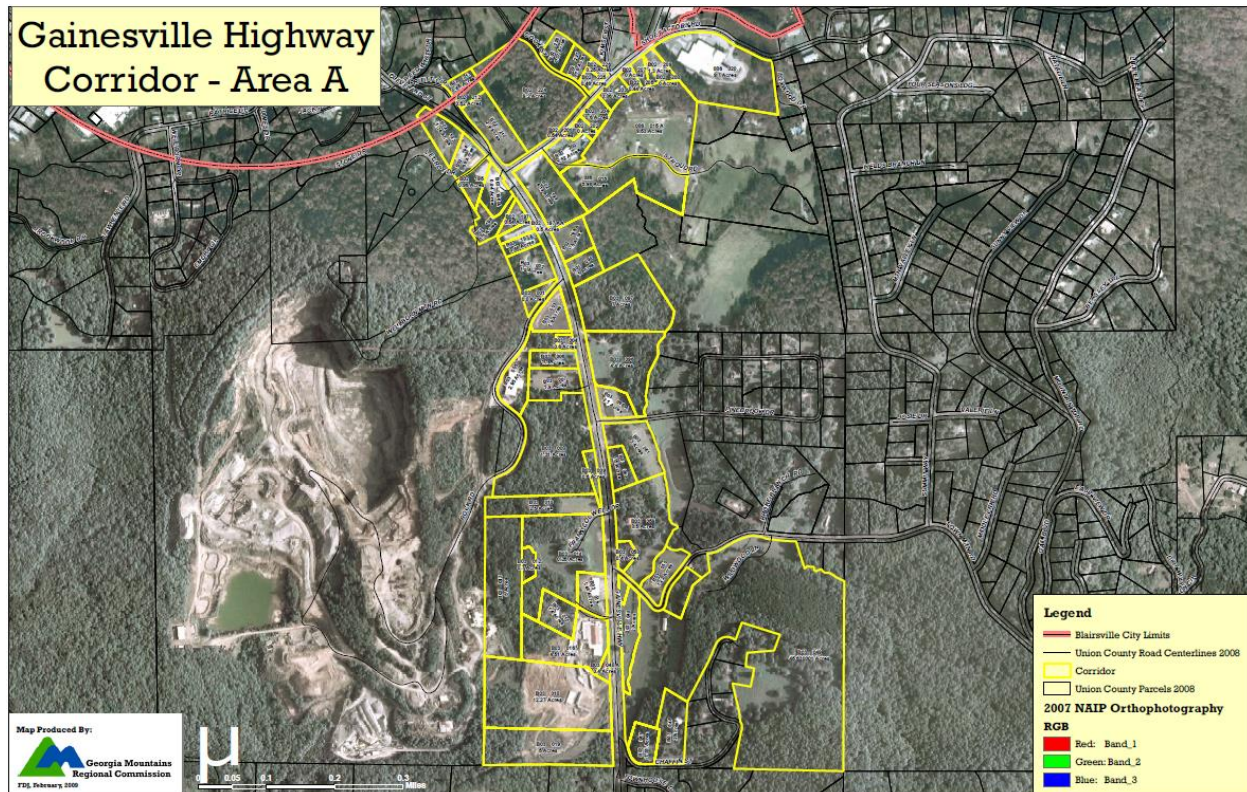
**Narrative** *Gainesville Highway Corridor*

This target area is a mixed retail, commercial, industrial area that includes a small mixture of housing units with the Gainesville Highway portion of the target area being mainly retail. A good number of the retail is dependent upon the tourist trade. These businesses include restaurants, antique dealers and a flea market. A number of empty buildings were noticed on Gainesville Highway that includes businesses and houses. Also noticed were a number of vacant lots with “For Sale” signs. This corridor also includes Blairsville’s historic central business district and adjacent residential neighborhoods. All redevelopment planning should recognize the importance of historic architecture and the role it plays in the definition of character areas. Infill designs should complement older architecture in regards to established scale, height, and rhythm.



The Shoe Factory Road portion of the target area is mainly governmental, manufacturing, retail and a small number of houses. This section includes a large empty manufacturing plant that has been closed for a number of years. This manufacturing site has limited visibility and could become an area for criminal activity. Governmental sites, within this area, include schools, fire and ambulance, jails and county works. Mixed use small to medium commercial and manufacturing is located in this area. There are also a number of cleared vacant industrial sites but these would be a difficult to build due to the steep mountainous grades. One of the roads within the target area is just wide enough for two cars traveling in opposite directions to pass. Some of the vacant lots have large trucks parked in them and are used as an area to turn around. This is a very high-traffic area used by students, residents, large trucks, as well as people cutting through the area to avoid the City of Blairsville. The road is narrow and appears to be county maintained. With the large amount of vehicular traffic this road should be equipped with paved shoulders.

This area has a mixture of residential structures and commercial buildings dating from the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although there remain remnants of early farmsteads, the overall character of this section is primarily urban in nature. Although there appear to be very few abandoned properties, the majority are currently in various stages of disrepair and neglect. The restoration of period details found on existing historic architecture is recommended. All new construction and infill should be designed to establish a standard setback from the right-of-way, with a preference for building heights limited to two stories. Attention should also be given to the planting of trees and the preservation of green space in this area.



### Implementation Measures *Gainesville Highway Corridor*

- ***Develop an inventory/profile of properties*** for potential redevelopment, for use in marketing to prospective employers or land developers.
- ***Develop monitoring report of code enforcement activity*** of corridor to ensure safety and general appearance of structures and properties.
- ***Develop/Update an inventory of local business*** to identify mix of local commerce and retail; Assess needed or desired businesses for potential recruitment.





**Narrative** *Murphy Highway Corridor*

This target area is mixed retail, commercial, industrial and residential and is used primarily by commercial, tourism and residential traffic. There are many vacant businesses along this route and has the appearance of one of the older true business sections of Union County. Industrial sites include concrete and gravel business that fronts the Murphy Highway. The area is characterized by many deteriorated buildings that need to be either torn down or upgraded to meet current usage requirements. The City of Blairsville also owns and operates a wastewater treatment facility that is to the rear of the first two lots entering the project area.

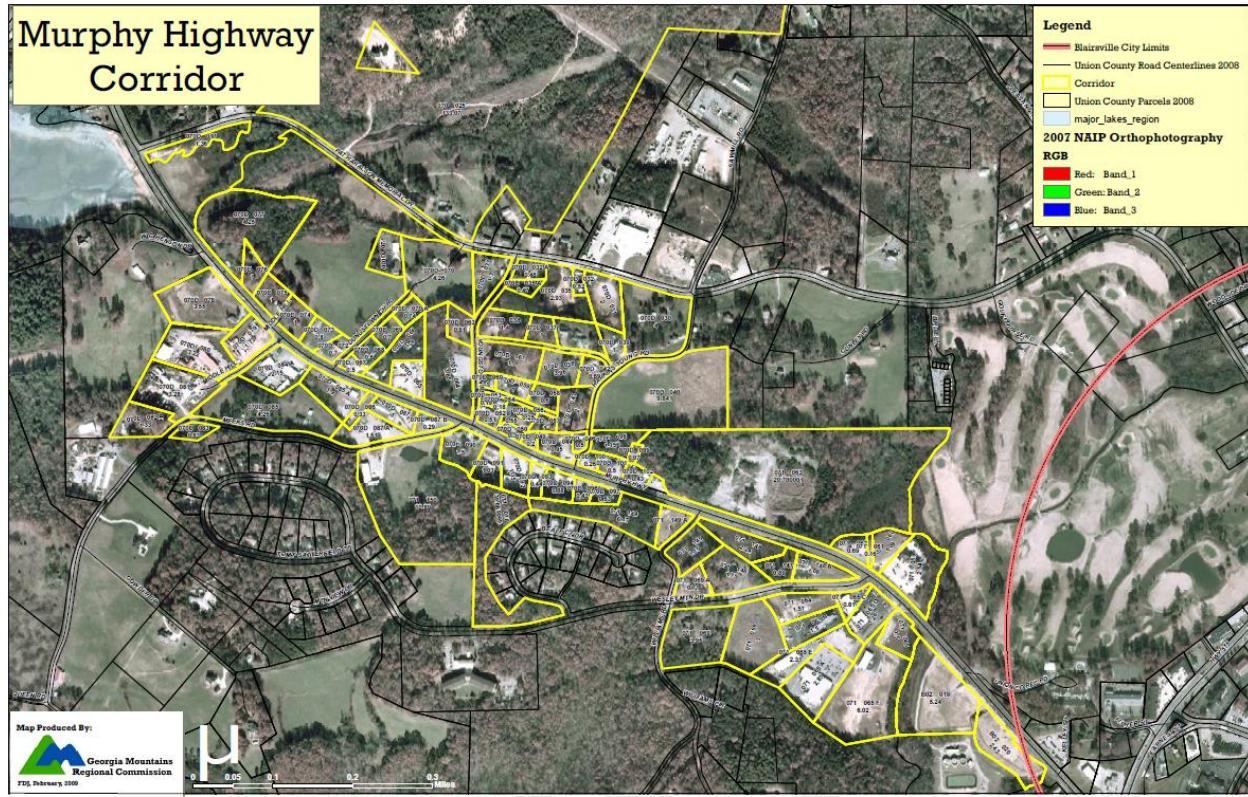
Tourists generally use this corridor when traveling to Murphy, North Carolina. This area could be upgraded and be much more appealing to the tourism market. Without tax incentives, this area will inadvertently maintain a downward progression of businesses and building appearances, thus negatively impacting the tourism economy for Union County and the City of Blairsville.

*Murphy Highway Corridor:* This area has an assortment of residential, commercial, and multifunctional architecture that date from the early to late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Setbacks in this area are inconsistent and add a sense of visual confusion to the area. Blighted and vacant buildings are numerous as well as vacant and underutilized lots and potential brownfield areas. Although newer buildings tend to be in better shape, older buildings tend to lack general maintenance and upkeep. High traffic volume, excessive speeds, and poor visibility hinder the safe navigation of vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

The Murphy Highway and Gainesville Highway Corridors have the highest concentration of potential brownfield sites. Abandoned construction staging areas, petroleum filling stations, used car lots and auto repair facilities are all associated with the use of hazardous chemicals and ground contaminants and will eventually require testing.



*Car Repair Shop Murphy Highway*



### Implementation Measures *Murphy Highway Corridor*

- ***Develop an inventory/profile of properties*** for potential redevelopment, for use in marketing to prospective employers or land developers.
- ***Develop monitoring report of code enforcement activity*** of corridor to ensure safety and general appearance of structures and properties.
- ***Develop/Update an inventory of local business*** to identify mix of local commerce and retail; Assess needed or desired businesses for potential recruitment.



**Narrative** *Highway 515 Corridor*

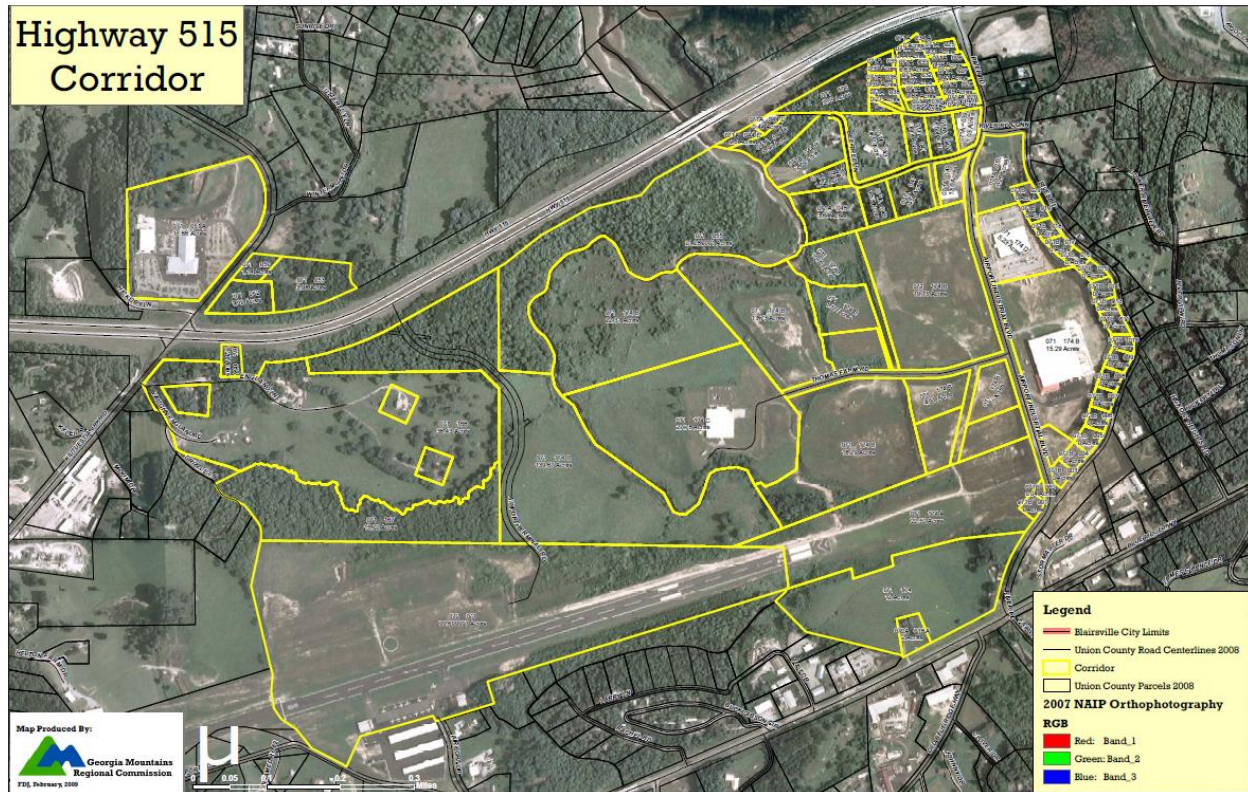
*Highway 515 Corridor:* The majority of the older building located along this corridor were demolished during the construction of the four-lane highway. The older buildings that do remain tend to be associated with early 20<sup>th</sup> century farmsteads. New construction tends to be large scale, big box retail, commercial, and institutional oriented architecture. Large, steeply graded slopes and storm water drainage systems are the predominant features located within the right-of-way. The Blairsville Airport Regional Industrial Park abuts a low to moderate income mid-20<sup>th</sup> century residential area where houses tend to be in various stages of repair and disrepair. The Blairsville Regional Airport is located in the southwestern section of the corridor.



This target area includes the Blairsville Airport Regional Industrial Park and the Blairsville Airport. This area has been designated for intense commercial and industrial use but is severely underutilized. The businesses that have located within the industrial park have traditionally been considered stable but recent assessments are now showing significant downturns. These include the United Community Bank training facilities (UCB), Applewood Door and Window and Cobb-Vantress Hatchery. Applewood is suffering tremendous losses due to the declining housing market. They have recently had to lay off 60-percent of their workforce and could file Chapter 11 within a year. The United Community Bank has shown economic shortfalls associated with increased foreclosures and write-offs. Considered the county's largest employer, UCB has experienced significant downturns in stock value and shareholder equity. Cobb-Vantress is currently operating under very little constraint.

Water and sewer are provided by the City of Blairsville. This is a very well-planned industrial park with future business sites graded and available for minor ground preparation. This industrial park is unique to the Northeast Georgia area because of the terrain. For this industrial Park to be successful the local and state governments must come together to formulate incentives for businesses to move there. Local governments have widely advertised the site for future economic benefits as well as its convenient proximity to the local airport.





### Implementation Measures *Highway 515 Corridor*

- *Develop an inventory/profile of properties* for potential redevelopment, for use in marketing to prospective employers or land developers.
- *Develop monitoring report of code enforcement activity* of corridor to ensure safety and general appearance of structures and properties.
- *Develop/Update an inventory of local business* to identify mix of local commerce and retail; Assess needed or desired businesses for potential recruitment.
- *Develop/Update long-term utility demand report* for industrial park
- *Update Airport Management Plan*



**Narrative** *Rural*

This district is a catch-all designation for those larger lots that lie outside Blairsville or slightly more populated transitional zones. There is no agricultural activity within City limits, and any activity near Blairsville is of a non-commercial scale. Many lots are simply large residential lots with most of the property left undeveloped. Much of this area feature properties with just a single house, though often one or more storage or agricultural structures. Most are long established properties of 30 years or more. In a couple cases their residence is substantially improved and indicative of a high economic class. Others are simply modest homes on lots retained purely for their scenic, rural value.

There are some older subdivisions and homes clustered around the lake or local streams. Most of these still comprise of lots at 1 acre or larger due to dependence on private wells and/or septic systems. This is a transitional space between established neighborhoods and the vast forestland throughout the county. It consists mostly of undeveloped land or recently built suburban housing. By type the subdivisions are attempting to fit in with the predominantly residential character surrounding the cities, but in form they differ by relying on insular road networks and a departure from the classic urban grid. Some of the houses are also larger both in structure and in terms of lot size than found within the urban neighborhoods.

This topographical transition aids the rural areas outside the cities, as well. By softening the change in density and concentrations of development, adjoining agricultural uses and woodland experience less pressure for up-selling. Likewise, it aids utility and infrastructure management by marking the essential limits of urban-level services

**Implementation Measures** *Rural*

- *Promote the Firewise and Fire Adapted Community programs*
- *Enforce State environmental laws and rules* regarding State Vital Areas and natural resources
- *Limit expansion of sewer service* outside of the city and existing urban areas, so as to minimize growth and scale of development in rural areas
- *Adopt policies allowing conservation subdivision development* patterns

**Narrative** *Mixed Use Commercial*

This district represents the main commercial corridor of Union County in the form of US 76 as it runs east/west through Blairsville and the heart of the county. It is a conventional arterial road with multiple lanes of traffic in each direction and harboring the variety of retail, dining, service and office operations that cater to both local residents and travelers in the area. Much of the development along this particular stretch is oriented around automobiles and drive-in customers, with only modest attention to pedestrian traffic. The road is designed to handle higher speeds and assist in getting travelers through the scene, and the signage and curb-cuts imply the corridor is for moderate to heavy traffic, making it a conventional commercial area.

The east side of this highway features the connection with the Glenn Gooch bypass, which serves as the main road for the local schools and several businesses going to or around downtown Blairsville. Coming in toward downtown the highway also features a few chain restaurants and local big-box style shopping centers featuring a Home Depot and Ingles supermarket. The midway point of the highway features an interchange providing direct access to downtown.

The west side features comparable retail and office development, including more fast-food dining options, additional shopping centers and gas stations. The far end of this corridor includes a regional athletics park and access to the industrial park and airport.

The corridor has developed due to the access of the roadway, the terrain allowing larger scale development, and the presence of utilities from the City of Blairsville. It is considered an appropriate catchment area for such development patterns, affording the City the chance to retain downtown in a more historic manner and reserving the rest of the county for traditionally rural forms. Utility demand will be the driving factor for any expansion as the City and County both wish to maximize capacity for existing residents and in a manner that keeps the county in a rural manner as desired by locals.



**Implementation Measures*****Mixed Use Commercial***

- ***Develop monitoring report of code enforcement activity*** of corridor to ensure safety and general appearance of structures and properties.
- ***Develop/Update an inventory of local business*** to identify mix of local commerce and retail; Assess needed or desired businesses for potential recruitment.
- ***Update traffic profile of corridor*** to identify any hazardous conditions and plan for any needed improvements.
- ***Develop/Update long-term utility demand report*** for area



<b>Narrative</b>	<b><i>US Forest Service</i></b>
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This district comprises currently established woodland reserved primarily for commercial forestry and/or conservation. The only notable intrusions into the property are unpaved roads, occasional residential structures or facilities required by utilities or the USFS to maintain the land.



Much of this land is found on steeper slopes and ridgelines, comprising the scenic vistas and outdoor recreation areas that help define Union County. Aspirations are to preserve this part of the landscape as best as possible, prohibiting new development apart from replacing existing structures or from forms that mimic the scale and context of existing structures in the area. Structures that are constructed in this area are encouraged to fit into the surrounding context through use of wood and stone materials and evoking rural or rustic mountain style architecture.

To the extent possible driveways and roads in this area should remain unpaved and utilities should be limited, so as not to attract greater development pressures.







<b>Implementation Measures</b>	<b><i>US Forest Service</i></b>
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- ***Support the USFS*** in maintenance and promotion of safety within the National Forest and wildlife areas
- ***Routinely review USFS Wildfire Management Plan*** for coordination among first responders
- ***Promote the Firewise and Fire Adapted Community programs***
- ***Enforce State environmental laws and rules*** regarding State Vital Areas and natural resources










# Union County Character Areas

## Legend

-  City of Blairsville
-  Lakes and Ponds
-  Rivers and Streams
-  Roads

## Character Areas

-  Mixed Use Commercial
-  Rural
-  Downtown Blairsville
-  Highway 515/441 Corridor
-  Gainesville Highway Corridor
-  Murphy Highway Corridor
-  U.S. Forest Service



0 1 2 4 6 Miles

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

While the Future Development Map illustrates the physical conditions expressed within the Vision, the Implementation Program is the overall strategy for achieving the Community Vision and for addressing each of the Community Needs and Opportunities. It identifies specific measures, both short and long-term, that must be undertaken by the community in order realize the community's goals.

The Implementation Program features four main components.

## Needs and Opportunities

These reflect an assessment of the conditions and factors influencing the area and people, stakeholder knowledge of the community and comments received throughout the planning process. In order to effectively realize their vision for the future a community must develop a well-defined implementation plan. By identifying the core issues and priorities of the community, the government and its partners can develop specific strategies that must be accomplished to fulfill the desired goals and objectives of the vision. It is critical that these issues and opportunities be clearly defined and understood by the stakeholders because they form the basis for the development of the community's long and short-term action plans.

## Reports of Accomplishments

This is the review of the Community Work Program (CWP) from the previous five years. As a new CWP is produced every five years, the items within the previous CWP must be identified for their status as complete, in progress, either postponed or cancelled. Those items that have been postponed or are in progress must be shown in the next CWP where appropriate, while those items that have been postponed or cancelled must also include a reason for their status.

## Community Work Programs

The third forward-thinking element of the Implementation Program is the CWP. This identifies specific implementation actions the local government or other entities intend to take during the first five-year time frame of the planning period. This can include any ordinances, administrative systems, community improvements or investments, financing arrangements, or other programs or initiatives to be put in place to realize the plan goals.

*Note: Some items listed will explore assistance through the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) via their discretionary contract elements with the Department of Community Affairs (DCA). These items will include "DCA" under the list of potential funding sources.*

## Policies and Long-Term Objectives

One type of action a community can establish to achieve its vision is the establishment of policy. These are those ongoing principles and practices that the community will observe in order to realize specific objectives. Some policies may compliment single action-items while others may provide ongoing guidance and direction to local government officials for making decisions consistent with achieving the Community Vision or addressing Community Issues and Opportunities.

## Needs and Opportunities

### Need to accommodate growth while preserving Blairsville's small-town character

(Blairsville)

*Despite recent growth Blairsville remains a comparably small town, a fact aided by the city's relative isolation in the mountains. But there has been new development, and since the city has the utility capacity and active commercial centers it will serve as a draw for some of the growth coming toward this area: Most newer households in the Georgia Mountains do cherish the scenery and natural landscape, but they likewise desire a close proximity to amenities like strong broadband service, medical care centers, and a variety of dining options.*

*To date Blairsville has been successful in activating existing properties for a downtown renaissance, even as the arterial highway continues to attract chain operations. To sustain the small-town appeal cherished by locals, the city must find a way to keep its historic core vital and attractive to businesses despite being off the main highway. This means identifying ways for new housing and commerce to fit in around downtown, in ways that evoke Blairsville's small-town scale and architectural character. Efforts should also be made to concentrate the commercial activity along the highway, trying to keep activity as tightly packed within the city as possible, so as to preserve the scenic landscape outside of Blairsville.*

- Review prospective design guidelines; Consider applications beyond Historic District
- Host regular "State of Small Towns" forum with Main Street and other support agencies
- Develop property assessments for downtown commercial lots (to assist with adaptive reuse)
- Study potential for locating a small business incubator in the city
- Develop sidewalk master plan
- Create an Economic Blueprint Strategy
- Create economic development program dedicated to small businesses and entrepreneurship
- Develop a "build-out" scenario for all of the city south of US 76 (identifying areas and ways the core could manage additional development)
- Streamline and coordinate business permitting (at both the City and the County)
- Perform a city-wide safety audit (assessing public spaces, signage, and design elements that affect public safety)
- Produce a parks and trails study for the city

### Need to support economic development befitting Blairsville's size and character (Blairsville)

*There is a demand for more and better job opportunities, and support for "appropriate" retail. The desire among residents is that efforts supporting business expansion do so with an emphasis on sustaining the community's rural character, minimizing the potential need for major changes to local infrastructure and traffic. They favor businesses that are locally owned, and especially within downtown Blairsville they wish to prevent signage, architecture, and parking conditions that detract from the existing form.*

*Given the right support and resources, the Downtown Development Authority can more actively seek out businesses suitable for the small urban setting and provide residents with the additional retail options desired. A formalized strategy and additional staff assistance will also allow the Authority to better assist existing companies in the area.*

- Create an Economic Blueprint Strategy
- Support the Development Authority
- Review prospective design guidelines; Consider applications beyond Historic District
- Host regular "State of Small downtowns" forum with Main Street and other support agencies
- Develop property assessments for downtown commercial lots (to assist with adaptive reuse)
- Study potential for locating a small business incubator in the city
- Create economic development program dedicated to small businesses and entrepreneurship
- Develop a "build-out" scenario for all of the city south of US 76 (identifying areas and ways the core could manage additional development)
- Streamline and coordinate business permitting (at both the City and the County)

### Opportunities to expand the area's walkability, bikeability, and passive use parks (Blairsville & Union County)

*Successful towns and small cities are inherently walkable, inviting people to circulate and see the community at a pedestrian pace and scale. Civic spaces, such as parks and plazas, magnify this role and provide a greater sense of destination.*

*Blairsville and its surroundings have the foundations for such networks in place, but there are opportunities to strengthen these elements. Ideas for more trails and parks have been nominated and, done appropriately, might enhance the charm and appeal of the city to residents and visitors alike. Maintaining and improving the walkability of the area would aid in making sure new development in the city matches the existing character.*

- Produce a parks and trails study for the city
- Develop a sidewalk master plan
- Consult with Georgia Bikes and GDOT in identifying safety measures and optimal roads for bicycle routes



**Need to improve government communications; Promote government efficiency and effectiveness***(Blairsville & Union County)*

*Expectations and demands regarding how governments communicate with their residents and business leaders has evolved. New technologies and a heightened awareness of prospects for growth in the Georgia Mountains region means citizens have different performance measures for government communication than past generations. Today's citizens want efficiency, but they also expect a quality return on their investments.*

*Union County and Blairsville currently have some degrees of long-term budgeting and are both engaged in some social media, but there remain areas in which both could improve how information is shared and used. The governments could also benefit from assurances their communication methods are in step with projected trends for future generations. Making such improvements would instill greater trust in the City and County operations, help protect officials and staff from legal concerns over public communication, and help many government operations perform in a more streamline manner.*

- Develop report assessing how public input is received and resolved
- Adopt a formal Communications Policy that emphasizes public relations
- Update long-term capital improvement plans for all departments
- Consider performance measures (or similar) for annual budgeting and project planning
- Publicize and promote annual performance measures
- Streamline and coordinate business permitting (at both the City and the County)

**Be proactive in addressing housing types and affordability***(Blairsville & Union County)*

*Housing affordability in the region is growing more critical, particularly among workforce/ starter units and senior-friendly units. Competition from tourism-oriented rental units can affect supply and pricing, as will topographic conditions and limited utility access that restricts the number of prime real estate properties.*

*The City and County should review their ordinances and consider how the latest housing trends (such as short-term rentals, tiny housing) would or would not prove viable in the community, then amend their policies as needed to both preserve local character and ensure the regulations do not add undue burdens to development costs. An exercise in formally reviewing how different housing types do or do not work within Union County can assist in guiding how to make the best out of local ordinances and show to the public how various types will preserve the area's low cost of living. Blairsville should also assess the potential for further types and scales of multi-family developments, as best as possible identifying in advance where and how best to accommodate such projects without damaging local character and preserving local safety.*

- Develop sidewalk master plan
- Review land use and subdivision policies; Amend as needed to mitigate impacts of new development
- Perform a city-wide safety audit (assessing public spaces, signage, and design elements that affect public safety)
- Develop a comprehensive housing inventory
- Develop a comprehensive housing study, examining how different types of housing would or would not fit within the community
- Develop a “build-out” scenario for all of the city south of US 76 (identifying areas and ways the core could manage additional development)
- Review code enforcement policies, specifically management of blighted properties; Amend as needed

**Need to plan for development on both stretches of US 19***(Blairsville & Union County)*

*The US 76 corridor through Blairsville serves as the main commercial hub of the county, but additional businesses and through traffic utilize US 19 both north and south of downtown. Murphy Highway, running northward toward Nottely Lake and the state line, already features a number of retail and service outlets as well as the Union County Community Center. The run south from downtown is currently not as developed but does feature commercial activity and is a primary route for folks traveling into town from metro Atlanta.*

*Both of these corridors serve as gateways to Blairsville and Union County, managing a blend of local and tourist traffic. Because of this they're also expected to receive more development as the community grows. As this happens, both governments desire to manage the development in a way that minimizes any adverse impacts, such as traffic, after hours noise, and incompatible land uses. Having alternatives destinations for commercial activity (other than just downtown or along US 76) is welcome, but only in a way that doesn't detract too sharply from the rural character of the area so cherished by residents. Development should scale down to meet the character of these rural highways, without an expectation that the corridors should expand or change beyond current configurations.*

- Create an Economic Blueprint Strategy
- Develop cost-benefit analysis for new development
- Confirm GDOT plans for local roads
- Create Gateway Masterplan
- Develop a “build-out” scenario for all of the city south of US 76 (identifying areas and ways the core could manage additional development)
- Develop a “build-out” scenario for Murphy Highway
- Review land use and subdivision policies; Amend as needed to mitigate impacts of new development
- Review code enforcement policies, specifically management of blighted properties; Amend as needed
- Consider landscaping and beautification measures to accentuate stretches of US 19 as small, rural gateways
- Implement measures within Union County's Urban Redevelopment Plan

### Need to preserve the County's rural character (Union County)

*Residents, visitors, and local business leaders cherish the scenic beauty and pastoral nature of Union County. They appreciate economic development and expect some change, but are desperate to maintain the rural, Appalachian character that currently defines the hometown they love. They want to know that there will be more to Union County's rural nature than just the National Forests.*

*The County can take several measures to be more proactive in preserving rural character without impeding economic growth, starting with a review of development policies. The development standards for subdivisions and for lots could be reviewed to minimize the prospective density in rural areas away from main roads and utilities. Design forms such as conservation subdivisions could be required to ensure more land is left undeveloped. The County could also establish greenspace goals that would identify critical natural resources outside the National Forests and seek ways to protect them from encroaching development.*

*The County and City should also work with their partners in securing economic development in appropriate areas, actively directing growth to parts of the community capable of sustaining heavy commercial activity and limiting the pressure to locate such development elsewhere.*

- Develop a greenspace strategy
- Support local agricultural interests
- Host annual "State of Local Agriculture" event
- Review land use and subdivision policies; Amend as needed to mitigate impacts of new development
- Target utility and infrastructure improvements in ways compatible with rural character
- Host annual forum with National Forest Service to review local conditions
- Host photo contest to identify and celebrate rural places and scenic areas (and use this to assess how to protect those places)
- Adopt and promote policies that support conservation design subdivisions
- Create an Economic Blueprint Strategy
- Support the Industrial Development Authority



## Reports of Accomplishments

City of Blairsville		
Action	Status	Comment
Complete Comprehensive Plan update	Complete	
Develop Bicycle and Pedestrian Accessibility Master Plan	In Progress	2023
Inventory infrastructure and service areas throughout county	Complete	
Review/Update Service Delivery Strategy	Complete	
Housing & Economic Development Study and Forum – Follow up from recession	Cancelled	Addressed now under different actions
Adopt water loss control program	Complete	
Residential meter accuracy testing policy	Complete	
Consumption Report review (by 3 <sup>rd</sup> party)	Complete	
Enact policy establishing random field checks of inactive meters	Complete	
Update inventory of historic sites and adopt preservation policies	In Progress	2022
Utility expansion and improvement	Postponed	2023; Expanded to include The Garden Apts.; have applied for funding to extend sewer infrastructure from Industrial Blvd to Backyard Lane
Review/ update policies for managing housing stock (density, type)	Cancelled	Addressed now under different actions
Develop neighborhood sustainability plans	Cancelled	Addressed now under different actions
Purchase water leak detection equipment	Complete	
Social media outreach survey	In Progress	2022
Update water/sewer demand forecast; Amend water/sewer network expansion plan as needed	Postponed	2026; Deferred as a priority
Develop reference guide for urban housing models for seniors/ young adult households	Cancelled	Addressed now under different actions
Develop improvement plan with North Ga. Network and Ga DED	Complete	
Develop adaptive reuse plans for targeted properties	Postponed	2025; Deferred as a priority
Develop targeted marketing program	Cancelled	Addressed now under different actions
Update Comprehensive plan	In Progress	
Performance review of code enforcement practices	Postponed	2023; Deferred as a priority
Develop annual monitoring report of enforcement activity	Postponed	2023; Deferred as a priority

Union County		
Action	Status	Comment
Complete Comprehensive Plan update	Complete	
Adopt policies for conservation subdivision development	Postponed	2023; Deferred as a priority
Inventory infrastructure and service areas	Postponed	2023; Deferred as a priority
Review/Update Service Delivery Strategy	Complete	
Inventory Opportunity Zone properties to identify redevelopment potential	Complete	OZ not renewed
Develop local business profile to identify targeted businesses needed in the area	Cancelled	Addressed now under different actions
Develop targeted industry report for Union County	Cancelled	Addressed now under different actions
Publish and distribute a guide of historic properties, scenic routes and tourist excursions	In Progress	2023
Develop/Update long-term utility demand report		
Scenic overlooks and trail system to Bridal Falls	In Progress	
Develop plan to support entrepreneurs and small businesses; include a SCORE chapter, small business training at NGT	Cancelled	Insufficient demand
Shotgun Trap Range	Cancelled	No longer a priority
New Double Gym	Completed	
Pickle Ball Court	Completed	
Saddle Club Improvements		
Appoint a NGT representative to serve on the UCDA Board	Cancelled	Staff turnover at NGT rendered item not suitable
Golf Course Irrigation		
Helton Creek Access Improvements		
Update inventory of historic sites; adopt preservation policies	In Progress	2022
Develop Historic Resources Report	In Progress	2022
Road Entrance @ Farmers Market	Completed	Farmers' Market Way connects to GA 515
New Poteet Creek Camp Sites	Postponed	Permission granted from TVA; Seeking funds
Boat Docks/ Ramps @ Lake Nottley	In Progress	Canal lake ramp done; New ramp near dam seeking funds
New Park/ Athletic Fields	Postponed	Considering different site
New Fire Station #13	In Progress	To be let in 2022
Southside Convenience Center		
Restore Old Gym	Postponed	2025; Deferred as a priority
Social media outreach survey	In Progress	2022
Develop improvement plan with NGN and Ga DED	Complete	
Update traffic profile of corridor in Opportunity Zones	Complete	OZ not renewed
Transfer Station Improvements	Complete	
Meeks Park Amphitheater	Postponed	2025; Deferred as a priority
Update Comprehensive plan	Complete	
Update Airport Management Plan		
Performance review of code enforcement practices	Postponed	2023; Deferred as a priority
Develop annual monitoring report of enforcement activity	Postponed	2023; Deferred as a priority

## Community Work Programs

*Note regarding the Work Program tables:*

The information presented in these tables is considered tentative and is to be used as a tool for a community's budgeting process. Local governments are not committed to spending exactly the amounts shown on each project listed in their Work Programs. The costs and dates shown are projections, used to help the community weigh priorities in each fiscal year. Projects may be accomplished in different years than displayed here depending on fiscal conditions, grant opportunities, or other factors. Governments are also encouraged to find cheaper means to achieve the stated outcomes where possible, and often projects can be accomplished with thoughtful application of staff time and other resources over a length of time.

Similarly, communities are free to pursue other projects beyond the work scope presented here. The action items in the Work Program are simply to illustrate what a community has identified as plausible measures for addressing the needs and opportunities presented within their comprehensive plan.



*City of Blairsville*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Estimated Cost</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
2022	Update inventory of historic sites and adopt preservation policies	TBD	DNR	City, GMRC
2022	Social media outreach survey	\$3,000	TBD	City, County
2022	Develop report assessing public input on govt. processes	\$5,000	Gen. funds, DCA	County, City, GMRC
2023	Develop Bicycle and Pedestrian Accessibility Master Plan	\$10,000	GDOT	City, GMRC
2023	Utility expansion and improvement	\$800,000	GEFA, ARC, GDOT	City
2023	Performance review of code enforcement procedures and policies	NA	NA	City
2023	Develop annual monitoring report of enforcement activity	NA	NA	City
2023	Host regular "State of Small Downtowns" forum	NA	NA	City, DDA
2023	Perform a city-wide safety audit	\$5,000	Grants	City, Police
2023	Produce a parks and trails study	\$5,000	DNR, DCA	City, GMRC
2023	Review prospective design guidelines	\$1,000	DCA	City, GMRC
2023	Adopt a Communications Policy	\$10,000	Gen. funds	County, City
2023	Consider performance measures for annual budgeting	\$2,000	Staff time	City; County
2023	Create econ. dev. program for small businesses	\$10,000	Grants, DED, DCA	County, City, DDA, Dev. Authority, GMRC
2023-2024	Create an Economic Blueprint Strategy	\$25,000	Grants, DED, DCA	County, City, DDA, Dev. Authority, GMRC
2024	Develop a sidewalk master plan	\$5,000	GDOT	City, GMRC
2024	Study re: a small business incubator	\$5,000	General Fund	City, DDA
2024	Develop a "build-out" scenario south of US 76	\$10,000	DCA	City, GMRC
2024	Streamline and coordinate permitting	\$2,000	Gen. funds	City; County
2025	Develop adaptive reuse plans for targeted properties	TBD	City	City, DDA, GMRC
2026	Update water/sewer demand forecast; Amend water/sewer network expansion plan as needed	\$5,000	City	City, Dev. Auth.
2026	Update Comprehensive plan	\$30,000	DCA	County, City, GMRC
	Sewer Extension from Industrial Boulevard to Backyard Lane		State Fiscal Recovery Fund	Water & Sewer
	Sidewalk extension – Kimsey St. from Cleveland St. to Tanyard Apartments		GDOT	Maintenance Dept.
	Cleveland Street Improvements		GDOT	Maintenance Dept.
	Dump Truck for		Gen. Funds	Maintenance Dept.

*Union County*

		Estimated	Funding	
Year	Action	Cost	Source	Responsibility
2023-2024	Create an Economic Blueprint Strategy	\$25,000	Grants, DED, DCA	County, City, DDA, Dev. Authority, GMRC
2022	Update inventory of historic sites and adopt preservation policies	TBD	DNR	City, GMRC
2022	Develop Historic Resources Report	\$5,000	DNR	Chamber, Historical Soc. GMRC
2022	New Fire Station #13	\$1,000,000	SPLOST	County
2022	Develop report assessing public input on govt. processes	\$5,000	Gen. funds, DCA	County, City, GMRC
2022	Host annual "State of Local Agriculture" event	NA	NA	Commissioner
2022	Host annual forum with National Forest Service	NA	NA	Commissioner
2022	Review code enforcement policies; Amend as needed	NA	NA	County
2023	Adopt policies allowing conservation subdivision development	NA	NA	County
2023	Inventory infrastructure and service areas throughout county	NA	NA	City, County
2023	Publish and distribute a guide of historic properties, scenic routes and tourist excursions	\$1,000	County	County, GMRC
2023	Develop/Update long-term utility demand report	\$5,000	County	County, Dev. Auth.
2023	Scenic overlooks and trail system to Bridal Falls (US19/129S)	\$100,000	DNR	County
2023	New Poteet Creek Camp Sites	\$100,000	SPLOST	County
2023	Adopt a Communications Policy	\$10,000	Gen. funds	County, City
2023	Adopt policies for conservation design subdivisions	\$3,000	DCA	County, GMRC
2023	Consider performance measures for annual budgeting	\$2,000	Staff time	City; County
2023	Create econ. dev. program for small businesses	\$10,000	Grants, DED, DCA	County, City, DDA, Dev. Authority, GMRC
2023	Review land use and subdivision policies; Amend as needed	\$5,000	DCA	County, GMRC
2023	Update long-term capital improvement plans for all departments	\$2,000	Gen. funds	Commissioner
2023	Sheriff's Office vehicles		SPLOST, ARPA	Sheriff's Dept.
2023	Fire Department vehicles and equipment		SPLOST, ARPA	Fire Dept.
2023	Youth ball fields / sports complex		SPLOST, ARPA	Parks and Rec
2024	Boat Docks/ Ramps @ Lake Nottley	TBD	DNR/ TVA	TVA
2024	New Park/ Athletic Fields	\$500,000	SPLOST	County
2024	Identify safety measures and bicycle routes	\$5,000	GDOT	Public Works, GMRC
2024	Develop a housing inventory	\$5,000	Gen. funds, DCA	County, GMRC

<b>2024</b>	Rural and scenic places photo contest	NA	NA	Commissioner
<b>2024</b>	Streamline and coordinate permitting	\$2,000	Gen. funds	City; County
<b>2024</b>	Gun Range Construction		DNR	Parks and Rec
<b>2024</b>	New northside convenience center		SPLOST, ARPA	Solid Waste
<b>2024</b>	New Elections building		SPLOST, ARPA	County
<b>2024</b>	Road Department vehicles and equipment		SPLOST, ARPA	Roads
<b>2025</b>	Restore Old Gym	\$500,000	Grants, SPLOST	County
<b>2025</b>	Meeks Park Amphitheater	\$50,000	Grants, SPLOST	County
<b>2025</b>	Develop a comprehensive housing study	\$10,000	Gen. funds, DCA	County, GMRC
<b>2025</b>	Develop a greenspace strategy	\$10,000	DNR, DCA	County, GMRC
<b>2026</b>	Update Airport Management Plan	\$5,000	FAA	Airport Authority
<b>2026</b>	Update Comprehensive plan	\$30,000	DCA	County, City, GMRC



## Policies and Long-Term Objectives

- Support the local Chamber of Commerce, Development Authority, Downtown Development Authority and other partners in efforts of community and economic development for Blairsville and Union County
- Participate in all appropriate intra-county programs such as SPLOST and Service Delivery Agreements.
- Maintain, and regularly review, codes and development policies
- Take necessary actions to protect the public water supply
- Continue to revitalize downtown
- Continue working to improve coordination and collaboration with City/County and local civic partners, such as the School Board and the Development Authority
- Maintain enforcement of mountain protection measures and other policies that support the County's mountain character and tourism
- Maintain enforcement of environmental protection measures that sustain water quality
- Continue to promote the local *Opportunity Zones*
- Pursue/Support infill development of developed but vacant properties
- Explore design guidelines in urbanized portions of Blairsville
- Expand and maintain pedestrian accessibility throughout the city
- Continue to encourage and support the Façade Rehabilitation Program.
- Add more artistic features throughout the city.
- Continue to maintain and upgrade local roads and bridges
- Continue to support historic preservation of critical public structures and eligible/interested private properties
- Support expansion of North Georgia Tech curriculum offering job training and entrepreneurship, higher education
- Limit expansion of sewer service outside of the city and existing urban areas, so as to minimize growth and scale of development in rural areas
- Promote Urban Redevelopment Plan and funding resources for historic properties
- Continue landscaping and decorative plantings throughout city
- Promote the Firewise and Fire Adapted Community programs
- Enforce State environmental laws and rules
- Limit expansion of sewer service outside of the city and existing urban areas, so as to minimize growth and scale of development in rural areas
- Support the USFS in maintenance and promotion of safety within the National Forest and wildlife areas
- Routinely review USFS Wildfire Management Plan
- Support local agricultural interests
- Publicize and promote annual performance measures
- Target utility and infrastructure improvements in ways compatible with rural character

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# APPENDICES

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**Population and Demographic Profile**  
**Area Labor Profile for Union County**  
**Summary of Comprehensive Plan Survey Results**  
**Sample Records of Public Involvement**  
**Quality Community Objectives Assessment**  
**SWOC Assessment – GMRC Digital Economy Plan**  
**Population and Demographic Profile**

## Population and Demographic Profile

DRAFT





## Community Profile

Union County, GA  
Union County, GA (13291)  
Geography: County

Prepared by Esri

Union County,...	
<b>Population Summary</b>	
2000 Total Population	17,289
2010 Total Population	21,356
2021 Total Population	24,886
2021 Group Quarters	303
2026 Total Population	26,662
2021-2026 Annual Rate	1.39%
2021 Total Daytime Population	25,094
Workers	9,226
Residents	15,868
<b>Household Summary</b>	
2000 Households	7,159
2000 Average Household Size	2.35
2010 Households	9,116
2010 Average Household Size	2.30
2021 Households	10,777
2021 Average Household Size	2.28
2026 Households	11,584
2026 Average Household Size	2.28
2021-2026 Annual Rate	1.45%
2010 Families	6,382
2010 Average Family Size	2.75
2021 Families	7,403
2021 Average Family Size	2.75
2026 Families	7,911
2026 Average Family Size	2.75
2021-2026 Annual Rate	1.34%
<b>Housing Unit Summary</b>	
2000 Housing Units	10,001
Owner Occupied Housing Units	58.9%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	12.7%
Vacant Housing Units	28.4%
2010 Housing Units	14,052
Owner Occupied Housing Units	51.7%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	13.2%
Vacant Housing Units	35.1%
2021 Housing Units	17,136
Owner Occupied Housing Units	50.5%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	12.3%
Vacant Housing Units	37.1%
2026 Housing Units	18,433
Owner Occupied Housing Units	51.0%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	11.9%
Vacant Housing Units	37.2%
<b>Median Household Income</b>	
2021	\$53,840
2026	\$57,816
<b>Median Home Value</b>	
2021	\$226,703
2026	\$246,215
<b>Per Capita Income</b>	
2021	\$31,462
2026	\$34,494
<b>Median Age</b>	
2010	50.7
2021	54.2
2026	55.3

**Data Note:** Household population includes persons not residing in group quarters. Average Household Size is the household population divided by total households. Persons in families include the householder and persons related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption. Per Capita Income represents the income received by all persons aged 15 years and over divided by the total population.

**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

February 09, 2022



## Community Profile

Union County, GA  
Union County, GA (13291)  
Geography: County

Prepared by Esri

		Union County,...
<b>2021 Households by Income</b>		
Household Income Base		10,777
<\$15,000		12.2%
\$15,000 - \$24,999		10.4%
\$25,000 - \$34,999		9.5%
\$35,000 - \$49,999		13.8%
\$50,000 - \$74,999		18.7%
\$75,000 - \$99,999		15.7%
\$100,000 - \$149,999		12.1%
\$150,000 - \$199,999		2.8%
\$200,000+		4.7%
Average Household Income		\$72,609
<b>2026 Households by Income</b>		
Household Income Base		11,584
<\$15,000		11.0%
\$15,000 - \$24,999		9.9%
\$25,000 - \$34,999		9.0%
\$35,000 - \$49,999		12.9%
\$50,000 - \$74,999		17.9%
\$75,000 - \$99,999		17.3%
\$100,000 - \$149,999		13.8%
\$150,000 - \$199,999		3.2%
\$200,000+		5.0%
Average Household Income		\$79,353
<b>2021 Owner Occupied Housing Units by Value</b>		
Total		8,662
<\$50,000		3.7%
\$50,000 - \$99,999		6.7%
\$100,000 - \$149,999		11.7%
\$150,000 - \$199,999		18.4%
\$200,000 - \$249,999		17.8%
\$250,000 - \$299,999		13.2%
\$300,000 - \$399,999		14.5%
\$400,000 - \$499,999		6.1%
\$500,000 - \$749,999		5.5%
\$750,000 - \$999,999		1.9%
\$1,000,000 - \$1,499,999		0.3%
\$1,500,000 - \$1,999,999		0.0%
\$2,000,000 +		0.2%
Average Home Value		\$266,653
<b>2026 Owner Occupied Housing Units by Value</b>		
Total		9,399
<\$50,000		2.4%
\$50,000 - \$99,999		4.9%
\$100,000 - \$149,999		9.6%
\$150,000 - \$199,999		16.8%
\$200,000 - \$249,999		17.6%
\$250,000 - \$299,999		14.1%
\$300,000 - \$399,999		16.6%
\$400,000 - \$499,999		7.6%
\$500,000 - \$749,999		7.3%
\$750,000 - \$999,999		2.5%
\$1,000,000 - \$1,499,999		0.3%
\$1,500,000 - \$1,999,999		0.0%
\$2,000,000 +		0.2%
Average Home Value		\$292,411

**Data Note:** Income represents the preceding year, expressed in current dollars. Household income includes wage and salary earnings, interest dividends, net rents, pensions, SSI and welfare payments, child support, and alimony.

**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

February 09, 2022



## Community Profile

Union County, GA  
Union County, GA (13291)  
Geography: County

Prepared by Esri

		Union County,...
<b>2010 Population by Age</b>		
Total		21,356
0 - 4		4.3%
5 - 9		4.8%
10 - 14		5.5%
15 - 24		9.2%
25 - 34		8.0%
35 - 44		10.4%
45 - 54		14.0%
55 - 64		17.2%
65 - 74		15.6%
75 - 84		8.0%
85 +		2.9%
18 +		82.2%
<b>2021 Population by Age</b>		
Total		24,886
0 - 4		3.9%
5 - 9		4.3%
10 - 14		4.6%
15 - 24		8.2%
25 - 34		9.4%
35 - 44		9.2%
45 - 54		11.4%
55 - 64		17.1%
65 - 74		18.1%
75 - 84		10.5%
85 +		3.4%
18 +		84.7%
<b>2026 Population by Age</b>		
Total		26,662
0 - 4		3.8%
5 - 9		4.2%
10 - 14		4.7%
15 - 24		7.7%
25 - 34		8.3%
35 - 44		10.1%
45 - 54		10.8%
55 - 64		15.8%
65 - 74		18.3%
75 - 84		12.3%
85 +		3.9%
18 +		84.6%
<b>2010 Population by Sex</b>		
Males		10,397
Females		10,959
<b>2021 Population by Sex</b>		
Males		12,214
Females		12,672
<b>2026 Population by Sex</b>		
Males		13,181
Females		13,481

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

February 09, 2022





## Community Profile

Union County, GA  
Union County, GA (13291)  
Geography: County

Prepared by Esri

		Union County,...
<b>2010 Population by Race/Ethnicity</b>		
Total		21,356
White Alone		96.8%
Black Alone		0.5%
American Indian Alone		0.3%
Asian Alone		0.4%
Pacific Islander Alone		0.0%
Some Other Race Alone		0.9%
Two or More Races		1.2%
Hispanic Origin		2.4%
Diversity Index		10.8
<b>2021 Population by Race/Ethnicity</b>		
Total		24,886
White Alone		95.4%
Black Alone		0.9%
American Indian Alone		0.5%
Asian Alone		0.6%
Pacific Islander Alone		0.0%
Some Other Race Alone		1.3%
Two or More Races		1.4%
Hispanic Origin		3.9%
Diversity Index		15.8
<b>2026 Population by Race/Ethnicity</b>		
Total		26,662
White Alone		94.6%
Black Alone		1.1%
American Indian Alone		0.5%
Asian Alone		0.7%
Pacific Islander Alone		0.0%
Some Other Race Alone		1.6%
Two or More Races		1.5%
Hispanic Origin		4.6%
Diversity Index		18.3
<b>2010 Population by Relationship and Household Type</b>		
Total		21,356
In Households		98.2%
In Family Households		83.5%
Householder		29.9%
Spouse		25.1%
Child		23.8%
Other relative		3.2%
Nonrelative		1.5%
In Nonfamily Households		14.7%
In Group Quarters		1.8%
Institutionalized Population		1.8%
Noninstitutionalized Population		0.0%

**Data Note:** Persons of Hispanic Origin may be of any race. The Diversity Index measures the probability that two people from the same area will be from different race/ethnic groups.

**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

February 09, 2022



## Community Profile

Union County, GA  
Union County, GA (13291)  
Geography: County

Prepared by Esri

		Union County,...
<b>2021 Population 25+ by Educational Attainment</b>		
Total		19,666
Less than 9th Grade		2.8%
9th - 12th Grade, No Diploma		7.1%
High School Graduate		27.2%
GED/Alternative Credential		6.1%
Some College, No Degree		23.4%
Associate Degree		9.1%
Bachelor's Degree		12.8%
Graduate/Professional Degree		11.4%
<b>2021 Population 15+ by Marital Status</b>		
Total		21,713
Never Married		17.5%
Married		61.8%
Widowed		8.6%
Divorced		12.1%
<b>2021 Civilian Population 16+ in Labor Force</b>		
Civilian Population 16+		9,289
Population 16+ Employed		96.7%
Population 16+ Unemployment rate		3.3%
Population 16-24 Employed		11.8%
Population 16-24 Unemployment rate		7.0%
Population 25-54 Employed		57.6%
Population 25-54 Unemployment rate		1.7%
Population 55-64 Employed		21.3%
Population 55-64 Unemployment rate		5.1%
Population 65+ Employed		9.3%
Population 65+ Unemployment rate		3.6%
<b>2021 Employed Population 16+ by Industry</b>		
Total		8,984
Agriculture/Mining		5.9%
Construction		12.2%
Manufacturing		4.7%
Wholesale Trade		0.9%
Retail Trade		10.2%
Transportation/Utilities		8.4%
Information		0.5%
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate		4.5%
Services		49.0%
Public Administration		3.9%
<b>2021 Employed Population 16+ by Occupation</b>		
Total		8,984
White Collar		55.9%
Management/Business/Financial		16.3%
Professional		20.1%
Sales		7.0%
Administrative Support		12.6%
Services		18.1%
Blue Collar		26.0%
Farming/Forestry/Fishing		3.2%
Construction/Extraction		7.3%
Installation/Maintenance/Repair		5.0%
Production		4.3%
Transportation/Material Moving		6.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

February 09, 2022



## Community Profile

Union County, GA  
Union County, GA (13291)  
Geography: County

Prepared by Esri

		Union County,...
<b>2010 Households by Type</b>		
Total		9,116
Households with 1 Person		26.2%
Households with 2+ People		73.8%
Family Households		70.0%
Husband-wife Families		58.8%
With Related Children		16.0%
Other Family (No Spouse Present)		11.2%
Other Family with Male Householder		3.2%
With Related Children		1.9%
Other Family with Female Householder		8.0%
With Related Children		4.4%
Nonfamily Households		3.8%
All Households with Children		22.6%
Multigenerational Households		3.4%
Unmarried Partner Households		4.2%
Male-female		3.4%
Same-sex		0.8%
<b>2010 Households by Size</b>		
Total		9,116
1 Person Household		26.2%
2 Person Household		44.7%
3 Person Household		12.8%
4 Person Household		9.6%
5 Person Household		4.1%
6 Person Household		1.7%
7 + Person Household		0.9%
<b>2010 Households by Tenure and Mortgage Status</b>		
Total		9,116
Owner Occupied		79.7%
Owned with a Mortgage/Loan		43.0%
Owned Free and Clear		36.7%
Renter Occupied		20.3%
<b>2021 Affordability, Mortgage and Wealth</b>		
Housing Affordability Index		138
Percent of Income for Mortgage		17.7%
Wealth Index		90
<b>2010 Housing Units By Urban/ Rural Status</b>		
Total Housing Units		14,052
Housing Units Inside Urbanized Area		0.0%
Housing Units Inside Urbanized Cluster		0.0%
Rural Housing Units		100.0%
<b>2010 Population By Urban/ Rural Status</b>		
Total Population		21,356
Population Inside Urbanized Area		0.0%
Population Inside Urbanized Cluster		0.0%
Rural Population		100.0%

**Data Note:** Households with children include any households with people under age 18, related or not. Multigenerational households are families with 3 or more parent-child relationships. Unmarried partner households are usually classified as nonfamily households unless there is another member of the household related to the householder. Multigenerational and unmarried partner households are reported only to the tract level. Esri estimated block group data, which is used to estimate polygons or non-standard geography.

**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

February 09, 2022



## Community Profile

Union County, GA  
Union County, GA (13291)  
Geography: County

Prepared by Esri

### Union County,...

#### Top 3 Tapestry Segments

1. Rural Resort Dwellers (6E)
2. Rooted Rural (10B)
3. Midlife Constants (5E)

#### 2021 Consumer Spending

Apparel & Services: Total \$	\$16,951,786
Average Spent	\$1,572.96
Spending Potential Index	74
Education: Total \$	\$11,409,946
Average Spent	\$1,058.73
Spending Potential Index	61
Entertainment/Recreation: Total \$	\$30,719,683
Average Spent	\$2,850.49
Spending Potential Index	88
Food at Home: Total \$	\$51,421,046
Average Spent	\$4,771.37
Spending Potential Index	88
Food Away from Home: Total \$	\$31,237,588
Average Spent	\$2,898.54
Spending Potential Index	76
Health Care: Total \$	\$64,645,991
Average Spent	\$5,998.51
Spending Potential Index	96
HH Furnishings & Equipment: Total \$	\$19,352,336
Average Spent	\$1,795.71
Spending Potential Index	80
Personal Care Products & Services: Total \$	\$7,322,489
Average Spent	\$679.46
Spending Potential Index	76
Shelter: Total \$	\$158,751,461
Average Spent	\$14,730.58
Spending Potential Index	73
Support Payments/Cash Contributions/Gifts in Kind: Total \$	\$27,371,197
Average Spent	\$2,539.78
Spending Potential Index	106
Travel: Total \$	\$20,913,563
Average Spent	\$1,940.57
Spending Potential Index	77
Vehicle Maintenance & Repairs: Total \$	\$11,184,321
Average Spent	\$1,037.80
Spending Potential Index	94

**Data Note:** Consumer spending shows the amount spent on a variety of goods and services by households that reside in the area. Expenditures are shown by broad budget categories that are not mutually exclusive. Consumer spending does not equal business revenue. Total and Average Amount Spent Per Household represent annual figures. The Spending Potential Index represents the amount spent in the area relative to a national average of 100.

**Source:** Consumer Spending data are derived from the 2018 and 2019 Consumer Expenditure Surveys, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Esri.

**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

February 09, 2022



## Area Labor Profile for Union County

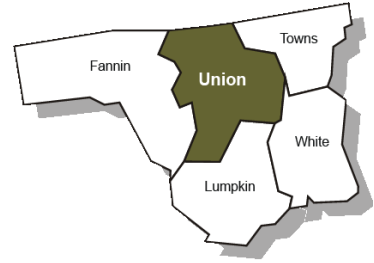
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## Area Labor Profile

Union

County



Updated: Dec 2021

### Labor Force Activity - 2020

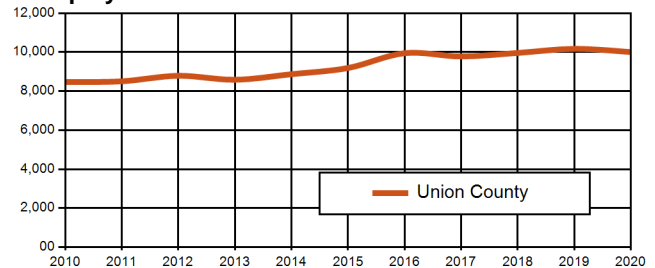
#### 2020 ANNUAL AVERAGES

	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Rate
Union	10,464	10,006	458	4.4%
Fannin	11,066	10,542	524	4.7%
Lumpkin	16,463	15,671	792	4.8%
Towns	3,841	3,585	256	6.7%
White	16,197	15,491	706	4.4%
<b>Union Area</b>	<b>58,031</b>	<b>55,295</b>	<b>2,736</b>	<b>4.7%</b>
Georgia	5,072,155	4,741,191	330,964	6.5%
United States	160,742,000	147,795,000	12,947,000	8.1%
Cherokee, NC	10,952	10,084	868	7.9%
Clay, NC	4,079	3,778	301	7.4%

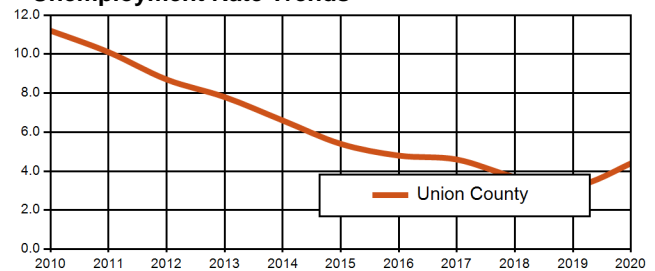
Note: This series reflects the latest information available. Labor Force includes residents of the county who are employed or actively seeking employment.

Source: Georgia Department of Labor; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

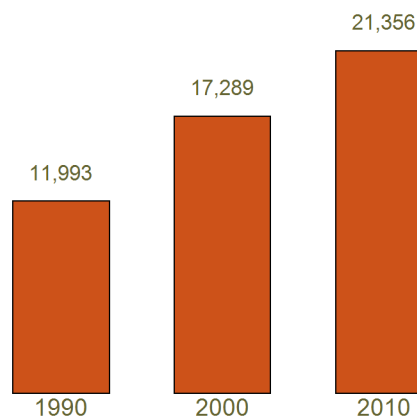
#### Employment Trends



#### Unemployment Rate Trends



#### Population Estimates



#### Population

	2010 Census	2020 Rank	2020 Estimate	% Change 2010-2020	2025 Projected*	% Change 2010-2025
<b>Union</b>	<b>21,356</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>25,358</b>	<b>18.7</b>	<b>25,456</b>	<b>19.2</b>
City of Blairsville	652					
<b>Union Area</b>	<b>149,195</b>		<b>169,984</b>	<b>13.9</b>	<b>181,229</b>	<b>21.5</b>
Georgia	9,687,653		10,710,017	10.6	11,335,283	17.0
United States	308,745,538		329,484,123	6.7	349,439,199	13.2
Cherokee, NC	26,250		29,073	10.8	32,693	24.5
Clay, NC	10,326		11,505	11.4	12,947	25.4

Source: Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, \*Governor's Office of Planning and Budget.

**MARK BUTLER - COMMISSIONER, GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR**

**Equal Opportunity Employer/Program**

**Auxiliary Aids and Services Available upon Request to Individuals with Disabilities**

**Workforce Statistics & Economic Research; E-mail: [Workforce\\_Info@gdol.ga.gov](mailto:Workforce_Info@gdol.ga.gov) Phone: (404) 232-3875**

# Industry Mix - 2nd Quarter of 2021

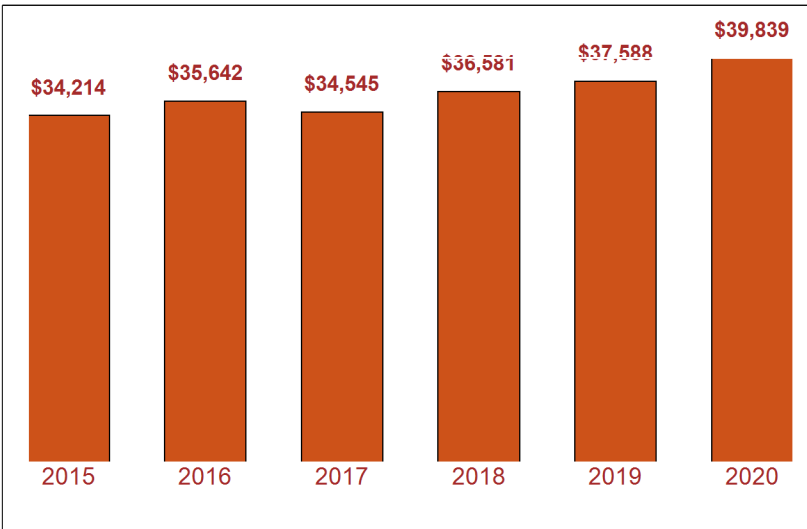
INDUSTRY	Union				Union Area			
	NUMBER OF FIRMS	EMPLOYMENT		WEEKLY WAGE	NUMBER OF FIRMS	EMPLOYMENT		WEEKLY WAGE
		NUMBER	PERCENT			NUMBER	PERCENT	
<b>Goods-Producing</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>1,001</b>	<b>13.9</b>	<b>893</b>	<b>529</b>	<b>4,629</b>	<b>13.6</b>	<b>908</b>
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	7	196	2.7	886	28	564	1.7	819
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	3	43	0.6	1,238	7	66	0.2	1,194
Construction	87	360	5.0	788	353	1,868	5.5	921
Manufacturing	29	402	5.6	953	141	2,131	6.2	912
Food	2	*	*	*	15	189	0.6	446
Apparel	1	*	*	*	3	*	*	*
Wood Product	2	*	*	*	11	76	0.2	733
Printing and Related Support Activities	5	8	0.1	350	9	14	0.0	460
Petroleum and Coal Products	1	*	*	*	2	*	*	*
Chemical	2	*	*	*	8	58	0.2	1,024
Plastics and Rubber Products	1	*	*	*	4	67	0.2	1,030
Nonmetallic Mineral Product	1	*	*	*	6	39	0.1	966
Fabricated Metal Product	4	*	*	*	15	433	1.3	1,013
Machinery	2	*	*	*	5	104	0.3	905
Computer and Electronic Product	2	*	*	*	3	3	0.0	1,895
Transportation Equipment	2	*	*	*	10	510	1.5	1,105
Furniture and Related Product	3	8	0.1	549	11	32	0.1	644
Miscellaneous	1	*	*	*	14	64	0.2	721
Leather and Allied Product	0	0	0.0	0	1	*	*	*
Primary Metal	0	0	0.0	0	1	*	*	*
Textile Product Mills	0	0	0.0	0	3	*	*	*
Electrical Equipment, Appliance, and Component	0	0	0.0	0	3	133	0.4	856
Beverage and Tobacco Product	0	0	0.0	0	17	214	0.6	535
<b>Service-Providing</b>	<b>477</b>	<b>4,298</b>	<b>59.5</b>	<b>779</b>	<b>2,459</b>	<b>22,658</b>	<b>66.4</b>	<b>666</b>
Utilities	3	14	0.2	521	10	319	0.9	1,274
Wholesale Trade	26	175	2.4	1,255	98	672	2.0	1,047
Retail Trade	96	1,271	17.6	533	483	5,233	15.3	561
Transportation and Warehousing	22	311	4.3	1,004	78	780	2.3	864
Information	5	30	0.4	1,399	36	*	*	*
Finance and Insurance	35	118	1.6	1,041	138	553	1.6	1,142
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	39	86	1.2	846	159	484	1.4	686
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	48	214	3.0	1,151	245	1,014	3.0	990
Management of Companies and Enterprises	3	*	*	*	4	*	*	*
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	27	118	1.6	1,013	138	783	2.3	759
Educational Services	1	*	*	*	22	1,479	4.3	468
Health Care and Social Assistance	80	642	8.9	972	291	3,561	10.4	880
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	6	45	0.6	267	47	494	1.4	487
Accommodation and Food Services	51	729	10.1	363	360	5,784	16.9	410
Other Services (except Public Administration)	35	144	2.0	627	160	763	2.2	612
<b>Unclassified - industry not assigned</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>886</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>1,023</b>
<b>Total - Private Sector</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>5,339</b>	<b>73.9</b>	<b>801</b>	<b>2,988</b>	<b>27,287</b>	<b>79.9</b>	<b>707</b>
<b>Total - Government</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>1,888</b>	<b>26.1</b>	<b>901</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>6,855</b>	<b>20.1</b>	<b>915</b>
Federal Government	6	51	0.7	1,326	24	260	0.8	1,235
State Government	15	194	2.7	658	59	1,885	5.5	953
Local Government	11	1,643	22.7	916	48	4,710	13.8	882
<b>ALL INDUSTRIES</b>	<b>682</b>	<b>7,227</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>827</b>	<b>3,119</b>	<b>34,144</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>749</b>
<b>ALL INDUSTRIES - Georgia</b>					<b>336,630</b>	<b>4,430,045</b>		<b>1,139</b>

Note: \*Denotes confidential data relating to individual employers and cannot be released. These data use the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) categories. Average weekly wage is derived by dividing gross payroll dollars paid to all employees - both hourly and salaried - by the average number of employees who had earnings; average earnings are then divided by the number of weeks in a reporting period to obtain weekly figures. Figures in other columns may not sum accurately due to rounding. All figures are 2nd Quarter of 2021.

Source: Georgia Department of Labor. These data represent jobs that are covered by unemployment insurance laws.

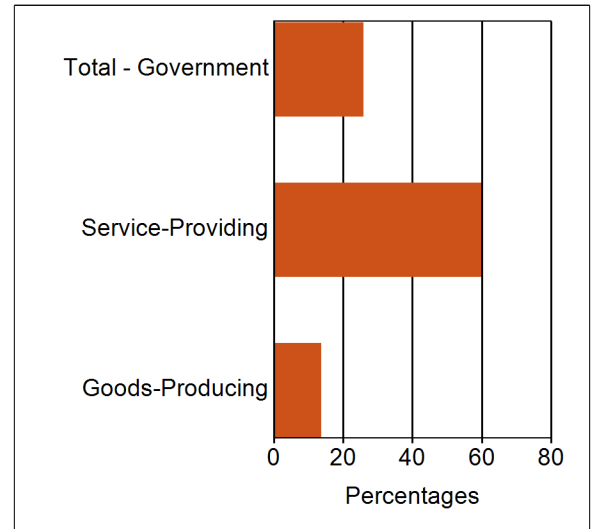
## Union Per Capita Income

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis



## Union Industry Mix 2021

Source: See Industry Mix data on Page 2.



## Top Ten Largest Employers - 2021\*

### Union

Corrugated Replacements Inc  
 Aviagen North America, Inc.  
 Chick-Fil-A  
 Davenport Transportation, Inc.  
 Ingles Markets, Inc.  
 Panel Built, Inc.  
 Regency Hospice of Georgia, LLC  
 The Home Depot  
 United Community Bank  
 Walmart

### Union Area

Chatuge Regional Hospital, Inc.  
 Freudenberg-NOK General Partnership  
 Mountain Education Center, Inc.  
 Truett-McConnell College  
 United Community Bank  
 University of North Georgia  
 Walmart  
 Walmart  
 Walmart  
 Walmart

### COUNTY

Towns  
 White  
 White  
 White  
 Union  
 Lumpkin  
 White  
 Lumpkin  
 Union  
 Fannin

\*Note: Represents employment covered by unemployment insurance excluding all government agencies except correctional institutions, state and local hospitals, state colleges and universities. Data shown for the Second Quarter of 2021. Employers are listed alphabetically by area, not by the number of employees.

Source: Georgia Department of Labor

## Education of the Labor Force

### Union Area

### PERCENT DISTRIBUTION BY AGE

	PERCENT OF TOTAL	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65+
Elementary	6.3%	1.6%	1.6%	4.5%	5.2%	14.0%
Some High School	12.1%	17.8%	13.8%	10.0%	11.1%	11.4%
High School Grad/GED	34.4%	27.5%	37.8%	37.4%	35.2%	33.0%
Some College	23.2%	44.6%	26.1%	19.5%	20.1%	18.3%
College Grad 2 Yr	6.5%	4.8%	6.3%	8.4%	7.9%	4.2%
College Grad 4 Yr	10.5%	3.7%	10.0%	14.0%	11.8%	10.0%
Post Graduate Studies	7.0%	0.0%	4.5%	6.3%	8.9%	9.2%
Totals	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note: Totals are based on the portion of the labor force between ages 18 - 65+. Some College category represents workers with some college with no degree less than two years.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau - 2010 Decennial Census.



## High School Graduates - 2020



	PUBLIC SCHOOLS	PRIVATE SCHOOLS*	TOTAL
Fannin	217	--	217
Lumpkin	243	--	243
Towns	58	--	58
Union	197	--	197
White	244	--	244
<b>Union Area</b>	<b>959</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>959</b>

Note: Public schools include city as well as county schools systems.

\* Private schools data is not available for 2020 from Georgia Independent School Association.

Source: The Governor's Office of Student Achievement of Georgia.

## Colleges and Universities

### Union Area

#### Lumpkin

University of North Georgia (Main Campus)

[ung.edu/](http://ung.edu/)

#### Union

Blairsville Campus (Satellite campus of North Georgia Technical College)

[www.northgatech.edu](http://www.northgatech.edu)

#### White

Truett McConnell University

[www.truett.edu](http://www.truett.edu)

#### Towns

Young Harris College

[www.yhc.edu](http://www.yhc.edu)

Note: The colleges and universities listed include public and private institutions. This list is updated periodically as information becomes available.

Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

## Technical College Graduates - 2020\*

PROGRAMS	TOTAL GRADUATES			PERCENT CHANGE	
	2018	2019	2020	2018-2019	2019-2020
Accounting Technology/Technician and Bookkeeping°	118	157	149	33.1	-5.1
Administrative Assistant and Secretarial Science, General	67	45	46	-32.8	2.2
Aesthetician/Esthetician and Skin Care Specialist°	32	30	33	-6.3	10.0
Allied Health and Medical Assisting Services, Other°	21	36	19	71.4	-47.2
Architectural Drafting and Architectural CAD/CADD°	1	2	4	100.0	100.0
Autobody/Collision and Repair Technology/Technician°	101	99	79	-2.0	-20.2
Automobile/Automotive Mechanics Technology/Technician°	261	204	248	-21.8	21.6
Business Administration and Management, General°	82	70	177	-14.6	152.9
CAD/CADD Drafting and/or Design Technology/Technician°	11	19	21	72.7	10.5
Child Care Provider/Assistant°	118	216	134	83.1	-38.0
Clinical/Medical Laboratory Technician	3	9	15	200.0	66.7
Commercial Photography°	22	33	13	50.0	-60.6
Computer Installation and Repair Technology/Technician°	60	61	28	1.7	-54.1
Cosmetology/Cosmetologist, General°	206	205	267	-0.5	30.2

# Technical College Graduates - 2020\*

PROGRAMS	TOTAL GRADUATES			PERCENT CHANGE	
	2018	2019	2020	2018-2019	2019-2020
Criminal Justice/Safety Studies°	44	86	87	95.5	1.2
Culinary Arts/Chef Training	18	18	9	0.0	-50.0
Data Entry/Microcomputer Applications, General°	57	153	92	168.4	-39.9
Data Processing and Data Processing Technology/Technician°	27	14	31	-48.1	121.4
Dental Assisting/Assistant	13	7	10	-46.2	42.9
Design and Visual Communications, General°	33	30	20	-9.1	-33.3
Drafting and Design Technology/Technician, General°	10	19	25	90.0	31.6
Early Childhood Education and Teaching	27	29	32	7.4	10.3
Electrical and Power Transmission Installation/Installer, General°	12	12	13	0.0	8.3
Electrician°	58	66	72	13.8	9.1
Emergency Medical Technology/Technician (EMT Paramedic)°	141	190	153	34.8	-19.5
Environmental Control Technologies/Technicians, Other	6	9	11	50.0	22.2
Fire Prevention and Safety Technology/Technician°	3	8	1	166.7	-87.5
Fire Science/Fire-fighting°	14	36	28	157.1	-22.2
Fire Services Administration	2	6	3	200.0	-50.0
Food Preparation/Professional Cooking/Kitchen Assistant°	12	26	11	116.7	-57.7
Graphic Design°	14	12	3	-14.3	-75.0
Health Information/Medical Records Technology/Technician°	10	22	21	120.0	-4.5
Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation and Refrigeration Maintenance Technology/°	84	123	113	46.4	-8.1
Industrial Mechanics and Maintenance Technology°	143	200	218	39.9	9.0
Interior Design°	27	23	44	-14.8	91.3
Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse Training	56	69	66	23.2	-4.3
Lineworker°	59	62	61	5.1	-1.6
Machine Shop Technology/Assistant°	73	84	69	15.1	-17.9
Mechanic and Repair Technologies/Technicians, Other	12	8	10	-33.3	25.0
Medical Insurance Coding Specialist/Coder°	11	1	15	-90.9	1400.0
Medical Office Assistant/Specialist°	63	76	84	20.6	10.5
Medical/Clinical Assistant	80	59	90	-26.3	52.5
Network and System Administration/Administrator°	28	39	39	39.3	0.0
Nursing Assistant/Aide and Patient Care Assistant/Aide°	125	92	82	-26.4	-10.9
Pharmacy Technician/Assistant°	8	9	8	12.5	-11.1
Phlebotomy Technician/Phlebotomist°	18	14	15	-22.2	7.1
Professional, Technical, Business, and Scientific Writing°	25	16	35	-36.0	118.8
Radiologic Technology/Science - Radiographer	18	19	17	5.6	-10.5
Surgical Technology/Technologist	31	17	9	-45.2	-47.1
Truck and Bus Driver/Commercial Vehicle Operator and Instructor°	21	22	32	4.8	45.5

## Technical College Graduates - 2020\*

PROGRAMS	TOTAL GRADUATES			PERCENT CHANGE	
	2018	2019	2020	2018-2019	2019-2020
Web Page, Digital/Multimedia and Information Resources Design°	20	11	7	-45.0	-36.4
Welding Technology/Welder°	453	464	289	2.4	-37.7

Definition: All graduates except those listed as technical certificates(°) are diploma and degree graduates. Diploma and degree programs are one to two years in length. Technical certificates are less than a year in length. Duplication may occur due to graduates with multiple awards.

Source: Technical College System of Georgia

\*Data shown represents Annual 2018, 2019, and 2020.

Note: Please visit TCSG website for any college configuration changes.

## Georgia Department of Labor Location(s)

### Career Center(s)

946 Appalachian Highway

PO BOX 488

Blue Ridge GA 30513

**Phone:** (706) 632 - 2033

**Fax:** (706) 632 - 7316

For copies of Area Labor Profiles, please visit our website at: <http://dol.georgia.gov> or contact Workforce Statistics & Economic Research, Georgia Department of Labor, 148 Andrew Young International Blvd N.E. Atlanta, GA. 30303-1751. Phone: 404-232-3875; Fax: 404-232-3888 or Email us at [workforce\\_info@gdol.ga.gov](mailto:workforce_info@gdol.ga.gov)

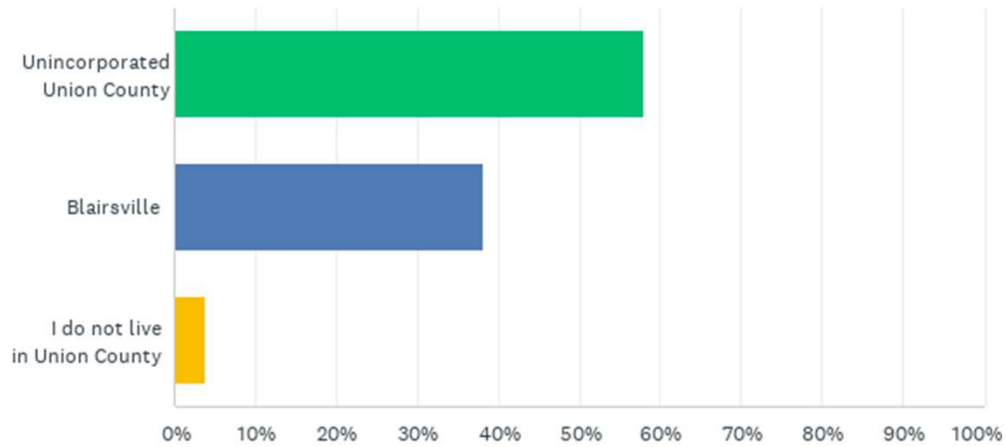
## Summary of Comprehensive Plan Survey Results

DRAFT



## Q1: I am a resident in:

Answered: 488 Skipped: 0

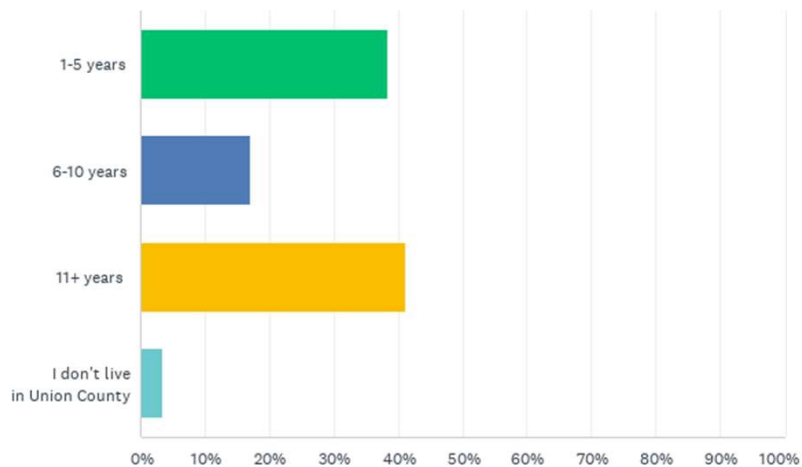


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1

## Q2: How long have you lived within Union County?

Answered: 488 Skipped: 0

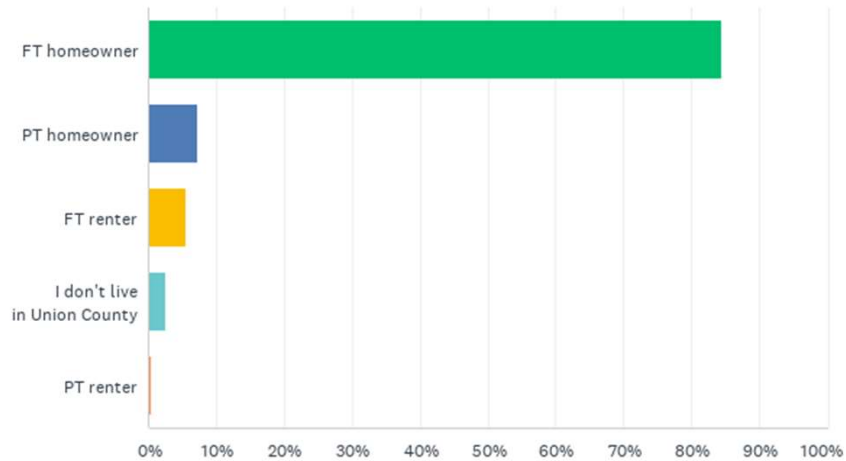


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2

### Q3: What is your housing status? (FT = Full time resident. PT = Part time resident)

Answered: 488 Skipped: 0

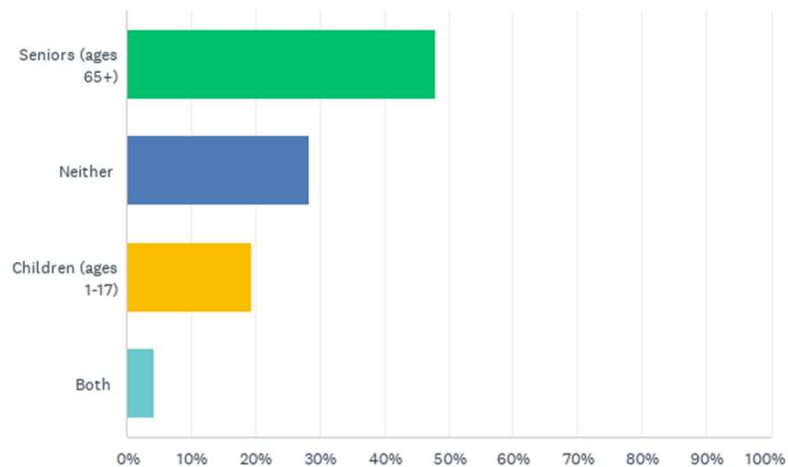


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3

### Q4: Do you have any seniors or children in your household?

Answered: 488 Skipped: 0

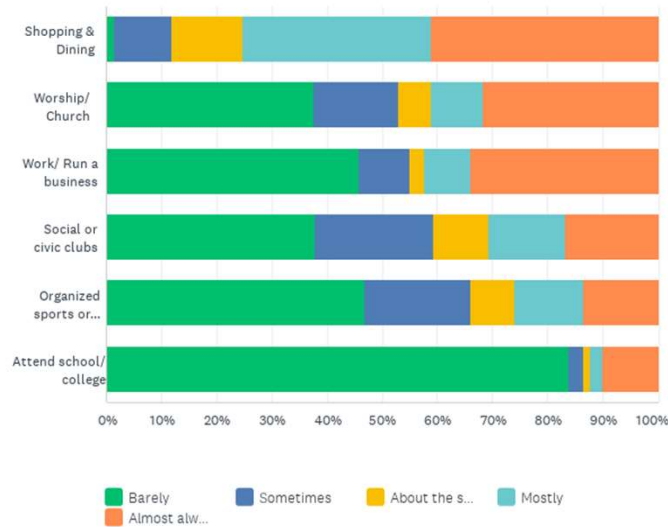


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4

## Q5: How frequently do you do these activities within Union County or Blairsville?

Answered: 488 Skipped: 0

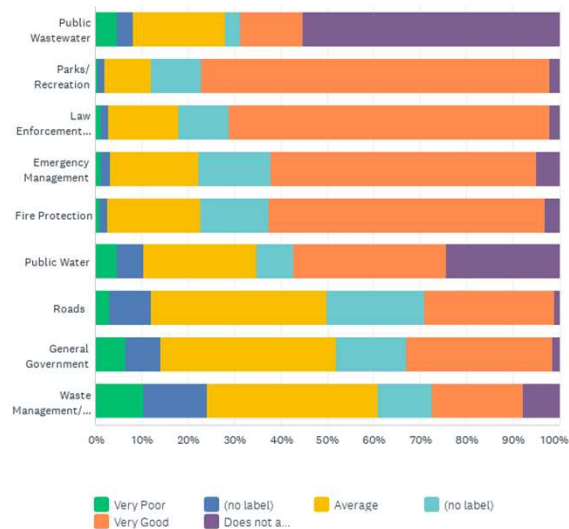


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5

## Q6: On a scale of 1 (Very poor) to 5 (Very good), please rate your satisfaction with the following services:

Answered: 428 Skipped: 60

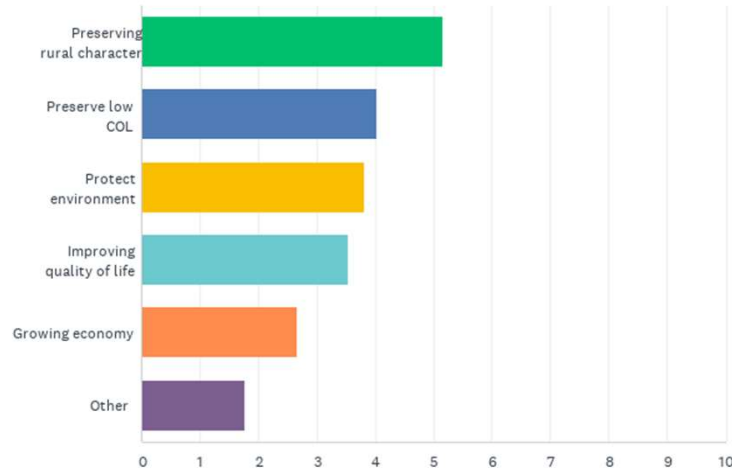


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6

### Q9: Please rank the following general issues in terms of priority, with #1 being the most important:

Answered: 294 Skipped: 194

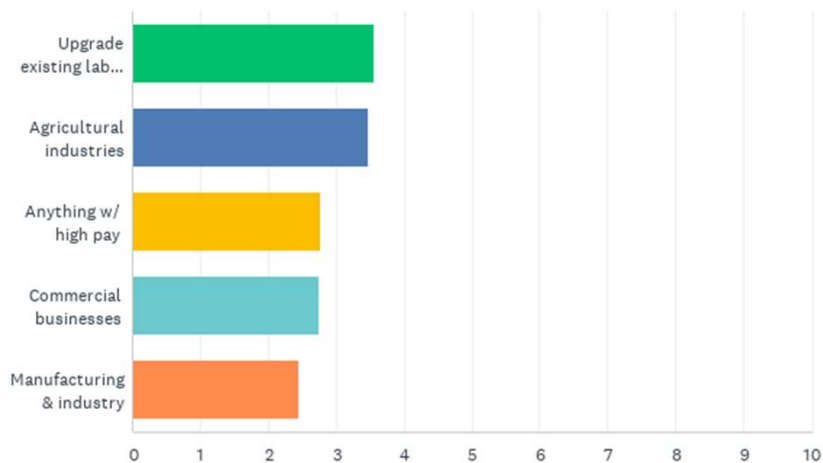


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7

### Q11: Please rank the following economic development priorities for Union County and Blairsville, with #1 being the most important.

Answered: 294 Skipped: 194

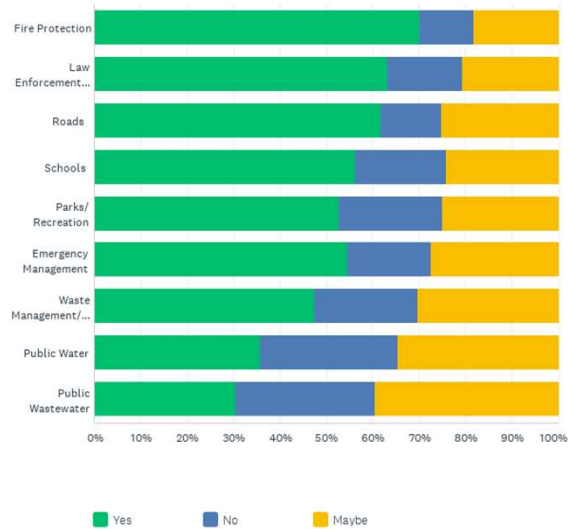


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8

### Q12: For which of the following public facilities and services (if any) would you consider it a good thing to grow the tax base?

Answered: 294 Skipped: 194

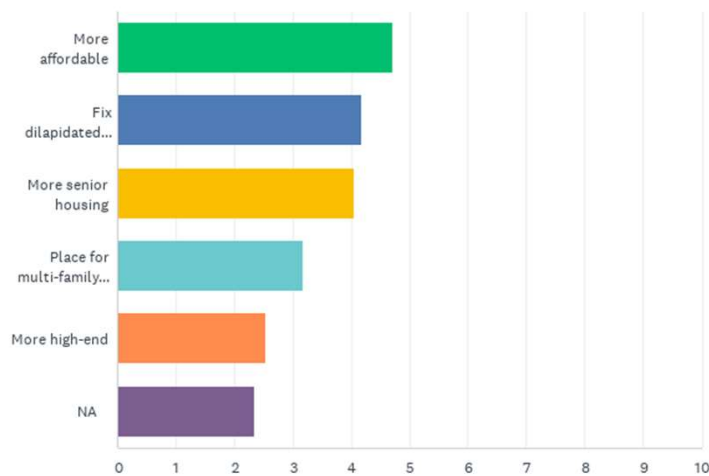


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9

### Q13: Please rank the following housing priorities for Union County and Blairsville, with #1 being the most important.

Answered: 294 Skipped: 194



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10





## 2022 Comprehensive Plan Updates

*Public comments received thus far imply a need for more affordable workforce and senior housing options. Which, if any, of the following options do you consider favorable for your community?*

	Union County			City of Blairsville		
	Yes	Maybe	No	Yes	Maybe	No
Allowing smaller lot size/higher density	3	3	4	3	7	
Multi-family housing (apartments)	4	5	2	7	4	
Allowing attached single-family units (duplex/townhomes)	3	5	1	8	2	
Manufactured homes	4	1	6	4		7
Tiny Homes/ Micro-housing	5	2	3	4	3	4
Secondary units/ "Mother-in-law" housing	5	6		8	3	

The City of Blairsville is known for its historic character and appeal as a commercial destination. There is strong evidence of support from residents that the City should work to retain this character. ***How strongly do you feel any of the following issues is threatening the business and character of downtown Blairsville?***

	Not at all	A little	Some	A lot	Very
Traffic		2	3	5	1
Parking		2	1	8	
Pedestrian Safety	1	4	5		
Incompatible Development		3	2	1	4
Weak/ No Design Standards		1		3	7



## 2022 Comprehensive Plan Updates

The following topics have been mentioned as critical issues for the coming years. All will be addressed in some way, but to make the most efficient use of time and resources it's best to know which issues the citizens consider most important. ***Using #1 as the most important, please rank the following issues in terms of importance to you.***

	1	2	3	4	5
Preserving our rural character	11				
Preserving a low cost of living	5		4	2	
Public safety	9		1	1	
Improving communication between govt. and the public	4	3	2		2
Improving the economy	1	6	2	2	

Union County has experienced a growing number of, and various types of, commercial development in rural areas. New development can mean jobs and tax revenues, but it can also increase demand for services, increase traffic, and have other impacts.

***How strongly should the County move to limit the following potential impacts of commercial development in rural areas?***

	Not at all	A little	Some	A lot	Very
Traffic	1		3	6	2
Noise			5	6	1
Lighting			1	8	3
Runoff/ Pollution			1	4	7
Smoke/ Dust		1	7	3	1



## 2022 Comprehensive Plan Updates




There has been evidence of strong support for trying to keep Union County rural. To achieve this, it helps to know which aspects of rural character are most important to local residents. ***When it comes to identifying what you love and wish to preserve about rural Union County, how important are each of the following elements?***

	Not at all	A little	Some	A lot	Very
Limited development outside of the city			1	5	4
Active agriculture				6	4
Scenic vistas/ Forests and parkland					10
Rural/ Appalachian architecture			5	2	3
Small population/ Sense that I know everyone		3	3	1	3

***Over the next 5-10 years, would you favor policies that seek to concentrate growth and development in and around Blairsville in exchange for limiting growth elsewhere in Union County?***

YES	11
NO	0
UNSURE/ INDIFFERENT	0

## Sample Records of Public Involvement



**Whether you are looking for adventure or solitude, Union County has it all.**

Venture out and explore the expansive natural beauty of our area, complete with majestic waterfalls, invigorating hiking trails and crystal clear lakes, or gather with friends and family at one of our state-of-the-art facilities, including our Horse Arena, Farmers Market or Union County Community Center. Union County has it all and we welcome you to our community.

Suches is an unincorporated area in Union County in the Georgia mountains, about 2 hours north of Atlanta. With an altitude of around 3,000 ft. Suches is blessed with clean mountain air and cool temperatures.

**2021 Property Tax Digest and 5 Year History of Levy: (click here) [2021-Current-Tax-Digest-and-5-Year-History-of-Levy.pdf](#)**

Union County is adopting the rollback rate of 6.024, down from last year's county millage rate of 7.178. The State Computation form indicates this is a 0.00% tax increase. The rollback rate is set by the State of Georgia using the county's net digest number.

According to the Georgia Department of Revenue, the "Net Tax % Increase" of 10.63% on the 2021 Tax Digest Form is based on growth in the county only (new properties, additions, etc.), NOT inflationary growth.

### News & Events

**Georgia Mountains Regional Commission invites public input for updates of the *Joint Comprehensive Plan for Union County and the City of Blairsville***

[FULL PRESS RELEASE HERE](#)

**GAINESVILLE** – The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) is assisting Union County and the City of Blairsville with the update of their Joint Comprehensive Plan, the State required document that helps shape and coordinate local work programs for the local governments.

There will be a public forum open to all residents at the Pat Haralson Memorial Civic Center (165 Wellborn St.) held on **Tuesday, February 8, 2022**. This is an open house event from **4-7 PM** where people are free to come at any time within that allotted period. There will be samples of the draft plan update available for people to review, as well as stations highlighting key sections of the document and the opportunity to ask questions or leave comments.

Any questions about the public involvement process can contact Adam Hazell at the GMRC as listed above.

### Union County Transfer Station Upgrades

The Union County Transfer Station has undergone some major renovations on the commercial side where large and bulk garbage is accepted. Stop by the UCTS to see just how efficiently the facility runs.

**TextMyGo**

Skip a phone call  
mobile phone's  
to find answers  
questions. Text  
County  
(706) 9  
Message

h

# UNION COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PUBLIC FORUM

Blairsville - 4:00 PM – Monday, November 29, 2021

*Please Sign In*

Name

Yett Hays  
Ann Sullivan  
Joanna Briggs  
DIANA BARTON  
Alexis Moore

Name



UNION COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
PUBLIC FORUM

Blairsville - 4:00 PM – Monday, December 20, 2021

*Please Sign In*

Name

Steve Rowe

MARK SMITH

Ytt Higgs

Mari Leonard

Shirley Rie

Name

# UNION COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PUBLIC FORUM

Blairsville - 4:00 PM – Tuesday, January 4, 2022

*Please Sign In*

Name

AUDREY KAIRIUKSTIS

DANIEL ASHLINE

Richard Malone

Donna Dillard

Charles Lee

PATRICK MAHONEY

Wayne Fowler

Allyson McInnis

Name

**UNION COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
PUBLIC FORUM**

**Blairsville - 4:00 PM – Tuesday, January 4, 2022**

*Please Sign In*

**Name**

Rob MEDWED  
Philippe Freitas  
Cheryl Melone  
Beverly Sutton

**Name**

# UNION COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PUBLIC FORUM

Blairsville - 4:00 PM – Tuesday, February 8, 2022

*Please Sign In*

Name

Henry R. Batten

Diana Barton

Wesley Wapner  
Carole Lively

Dog Lively

Jennifer Garner

Mike Hogg

Brad & Pam Hendry

Rich Villarreal

Kerry Villarreal

Jeanette Partridge

Hunter Partridge

Name

## Quality Community Objectives Assessment

In 1999 the Board of the Department of Community Affairs adopted the Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) as a statement of the development patterns and options that will help Georgia preserve its unique cultural, natural and historic resources while looking to the future and developing to its fullest potential. This assessment should be used a tool by a community to compare how it is progressing toward the sustainable and livable objectives, but no community will be judged on its progress. The questions focus on local ordinances, policies, and organizational strategies intended to create and expand quality growth principles. A majority of positive responses for a particular objective may indicate that the community has in place many of the governmental options for managing development patterns. Negative responses may provide guidance as to how to focus planning and implementation efforts for those governments seeking to achieve these Quality Community Objectives. Should a community decide to pursue a particular objective it may consider this assessment a means of monitoring progress towards achievement.

### 1. Economic Prosperity

Encourage development or expansion of businesses and industries that are suitable for the community. Factors to consider when determining suitability include job skills required; long-term sustainability; linkages to other economic activities in the region; impact on the resources of the area; or prospects for creating job opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse local workforce.

*The governments and their partners recognize the importance of a strategic approach to sustaining their strong economy and maintaining the area's vital character. The City and County supports the local Chamber of Commerce, the Industrial Development Authority, and the Downtown Development Authority as part of ongoing efforts to support economic development for the community. The governments also maintain contact with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission and the State for pursuit of assistance and outside funding opportunities in support of economic development opportunities.*

### 2. Resource Management

Promote the efficient use of natural resources and identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas of the community. This may be achieved by promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy generation; encouraging green building construction and renovation; utilizing appropriate waste management techniques; fostering water conservation and reuse; or setting environmentally sensitive areas aside as green space or conservation reserves.

*The governments maintain contact with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission and the Department of Natural Resources to work for the protection and promotion of cultural resources in the area. The governments also employ policies and practices related to State Vital Areas, National Wetland Inventory (FIRM) data and other applicable sources to monitor and enforce the preservation of environmentally sensitive areas.*

### 3. Efficient Land Use

Maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the costly conversion of undeveloped land at the periphery of the community. This may be achieved by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the traditional core of the community; designing new development to minimize the amount of land consumed; carefully planning expansion of public infrastructure; or maintaining open space in agricultural, forestry, or conservation uses.

*Through this planning process, ongoing efforts to update area mapping, and regular communication with each other, the City and County work to ensure local development policies*



*support sustainable development that enables economic growth while managing local resources, utilities and infrastructure.*

#### **4. Local Preparedness**

Identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of future the community seeks to achieve. These prerequisites might include infrastructure (roads, water, sewer) to support or direct new growth; ordinances and regulations to manage growth as desired; leadership and staff capable of responding to opportunities and managing new challenges; or undertaking an all-hazards approach to disaster preparedness and response.

*Through this planning process and ongoing coordination among emergency responders, and through regular communication with other stakeholders (such as the local hospital), the City and County work to ensure the community is properly poised to prevent, manage and respond to growth pressures and natural and man-made hazards.*

#### **5. Sense of Place**

Protect and enhance the community's unique qualities. This may be achieved by maintaining the downtown as focal point of the community; fostering compact, walkable, mixed-use development; protecting and revitalizing historic areas of the community; encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community; or protecting scenic and natural features that are important to defining the community's character.

*The City and Downtown Development Authority are pursuing their Downtown Master Plan, and through additional ongoing planning practices the City of Blairsville is working to preserve and build upon the existing character of the historic city center. The City and County will both regularly monitor development trends and local land use policies to ensure all is being done to maintain the historic sense of community that defines Union County and Blairsville.*

#### **6. Regional Cooperation**

Cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions to address shared needs. This may be achieved by actively participating in regional organizations; identifying joint projects that will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer; or developing collaborative solutions for regional issues such as protection of shared natural resources, development of the transportation network, or creation of a tourism plan.

*Blairsville and Union County actively coordinate with each other in maintaining their local Service Delivery Strategy and SPLOST program, and participate with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission and other appropriate regional organizations. The governments also maintain regular contact with various State Departments to ensure knowledge of, and access to, their programs and resources. The City and County are considered active partners in regional activities and do not feel threatened or adversely impacted by any regional partners.*

#### **7. Housing Options**

Promote an adequate range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource efficient housing in the community. This may be achieved by encouraging development of a variety of housing types, sizes, costs, and densities in each neighborhood; promoting programs to provide housing for residents of all socioeconomic backgrounds, including affordable mortgage finance options; instituting programs to address homelessness issues in the community; or coordinating with local economic development programs to ensure availability of adequate workforce housing in the community.

*Through this and ongoing planning processes, the City of and County are actively working to monitor local housing needs and work to enforce policies that promote quality, affordable housing options as needed.*

## **8. Transportation Options**

Address the transportation needs, challenges and opportunities of all community residents. This may be achieved by fostering alternatives to transportation by automobile, including walking, cycling, and transit; employing traffic calming measures throughout the community; requiring adequate connectivity between adjoining developments; or coordinating transportation and land use decision-making within the community.

*Neither the City of Blairsville nor union County has an active, comprehensive transportation planning program. However, both local governments communicate their concerns and issues to the regional GDOT office and all communities do participate in the public involvement process for the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) as able. As the region grows additional transportation planning would be considered a benefit, if not a necessity.*

## **9. Educational Opportunities**

Make educational and training opportunities readily available to enable all community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, manage their finances, or pursue life ambitions. This can be achieved by expanding and improving local educational institutions or programs; providing access to other institutions in the region; instituting programs to improve local graduation rates; expanding vocational education programs; or coordinating with local economic development programs to ensure an adequately trained and skilled workforce.

*Both governments work with the Lumpkin County School Board to ensure access for quality primary and secondary educational facilities and programs for area residents. Both governments also work with other partners to ensure access to viable post-secondary resources such as the University of North Georgia, North Georgia Technical College, and other area educational institutions.*

## **10. Community Health**

Ensure that all community residents, regardless of age, ability, or income, have access to critical goods and services, safe and clean neighborhoods, and good work opportunities. This may be achieved by providing services to support the basic needs of disadvantaged residents, including the disabled; instituting programs to improve public safety; promoting programs that foster better health and fitness; or otherwise providing all residents the opportunity to improve their circumstances in life and to fully participate in the community.

*The governments work with union General Hospital and the Union County Department of Public Health to ensure access for quality health care facilities and programs for area residents. The governments also work with other partners to monitor residents' needs and requests in providing access to these services as the area grows.*

## SWOC Assessment – GMRC Digital Economy Plan

	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Challenges
Workforce/ Education	Higher Educational Institutions – University of North Georgia, Brenau, North Georgia Technical School, Lanier Technical School,	Limited existing hi-tech labor force	Economic and demographic growth of metro Atlanta	Attraction/ Retention of top technology talent
	Faster Business Start-up Time	Low family income	Job fairs held within the region by GMRC Workforce Development	Competition from other metro areas
	Dawson GigCenter – Business start-ups			
	GMRC Workforce Development			
Infrastructure	Strong Dev. Authorities and Chamber offices to assist start-up businesses and industries			
	Cooperative EMC's that deliver good products	System Redundancy. Residents and Businesses need more choices for internet service.	Tourism/outdoor recreation related industry	Topographically the GMRC Region is difficult to traverse for aerial line installation
	North Georgia Network	Cost prohibitive		
	Access to metro Atlanta	Geographic isolation		
	Ga 400 – Technology Corridor			
Local Government	Residents ability to telecommute			
	GMRC fostering cooperation	Limited funding resources	Educating local government on importance of broadband access	Finding Grant funds for broadband projects
	Quality Development Authorities and Joint Development Authorities	State needs to put more emphasis on education		Need to better communicate to State Legislators the Region's needs regarding broadband initiatives & projects
	<p><b>Goal:</b> <i>Ensure new telecommunication networks for needed accessibility and reliability to support the growth of the regional economy.</i></p> <p><b>Strategy:</b> <i>Prepare to meet industry and business telecommunication needs by assisting with fiber optic network development. The purpose of this strategy is to support, develop, and provide educational opportunities regarding telecommunication systems in the region.</i></p> <p><b>Strategy:</b> <i>Promote and support the use of health information technology (IT). The purpose of this strategy is to encourage local partnerships between health providers and local leaders in using telecommunications and other information technology to improve care to patients and lower health costs.</i></p>			